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Indian Philosophy and the Consequences of Knowledge

Themes in Ethics, Metaphysics and Soteriology

Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad

ASHGATE e-BOOK

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For Krishna Prasad

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CHAKRAVARTHI RAM-PRASAD
Lancaster University, UK

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Preface

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Introduction

Indian philosophical thought never explicitly made the claim that knowledge was an end in itself, inquiry important for its own sake. But then again, neither was the idea of 'pure' philosophy interested only with intellectual exploration a part of the classical Greek tradition, for all that contemporary Western philosophy takes itself to be descended from it. There is no doubt that anything that may be called a love of wisdom in the Indian tradition was directed for the further purposes of such wisdom: to seek knowledge was to seek it for the end that it would deliver. To say that is not to denigrate the intellectual power of the tradition – far from it. By always working within the framework of a teleology beyond the intellectual exercise itself, the Indian thinkers invite us to consider philosophy as not just the attainment of knowledge but a consideration of its consequences.

Having said this, it must also be noted that many classical Indian texts, by the sheer weight of their attention, and by a joyous and focussed concern for inquiry, show that they care for analysis and argument for their own intellectual sake too; texts making the preliminary claim that they wish to attain liberation or the grace of God (or both) then spend the rest of their time stating what they take knowledge to mean, what its instruments and modalities are, what the structure of the world is like, how meaning is constructed and conveyed, how reasoning is structured, and so on. In a way, the Indian thinkers have it both ways. They display a formal commitment to an ultimate end, but also that it requires careful analytic inquiry for its attainment. The familiar divisions between theology, philosophy of religion and philosophy cannot be sustained in any proper understanding of the Indian tradition. (But that should not surprise us; until the late-19th century, who would have conceived of philosophy in the Western tradition as such a specialized and special enterprise?)

I do not propose in this book to provide an apologetic narrative about the place of inquiry in Indian thought, and therefore the very existence of something like philosophy in the Indian tradition. Instead, I want to simply note that Indian philosophy is about both conducting a purely intellectual study of reality and seeking some higher end that this study is held to secure. Such an understanding of the tradition helps set the context of the chapters in this book.

I have kept the notion of 'knowledge' vague here, since it would require a book of its own to explore what Sanskrit concepts are appropriately understood as 'knowledge' and how those concepts are articulated and justified. Instead, I propose simply to take knowledge to be an understanding of some aspects of reality howsoever defined, an understanding deriving from some cognitive procedure that is amenable to systematic representation by either the person concerned or someone else. That will suffice for the purpose of this book. That purpose is to look at some very different areas in which the attainment of knowledge is vital for a greater end.

This book contains three very different studies, but I believe that together they demonstrate that, in their varied ways, Indian thinkers sought knowledge with its

larger consequences in mind. I hope something of the rich texture and multifarious concerns of Indian philosophy can be brought out through these studies. At the same time, I also want to take the opportunity of engagement with the classical texts to develop philosophical arguments for our times; this book is certainly not meant to be a philological and historical anatomization of Indian thought.

The first chapter deals with the way in which the challenging and unique ideas of the Jain philosophers might be fashioned into a worldview that critically engages with many pressing issues in contemporary Western political, theological and, above all, ethical thought. Whether this worldview that I develop – which I call 'multiplism' – is Jaina or not can be left open. It is certainly inspired by a reading of Jaina philosophy, and there is no reason why Jainism should today reject the position that I have tried to present here; but I do not make the narrow claim that this is what the classical Jaina thinkers said. Multiplism is the result of my reading of the three famous and core claims of Jaina philosophy. The first is *syādvāda*: suitably conditionalized, a statement and its negation can both be asserted. The second is *anekāntavāda*: reality is fundamentally many-sided in a way that does not allow any single account of it. The third is *nayavāda*: each schematic account of the world is circumscribed, both truthful and limited. Out of these comes an understanding of the world as being a single reality that is also multiply realizable in our truthful accounting of it. If the logical bases of such a metaphysics are not challenging enough, there is the immediate implication that our lives should be lived in a way that accords with such a reality. This life is one that does not exclude, overcome or simply co-exist with others who have different schemas; instead it seeks an affinity with others that preserves their difference while yet locating oneself imaginatively in that difference. The consequence of the Jaina knowledge of a multiplist reality is a far-reaching ethic of engagement with others.

The second chapter is a presentation of various theories of consciousness put forward in classical India. In seeking to define the nature of knowledge, the philosophers realized that they had to first understand the nature of the vehicle of knowledge, namely, cognition. As contemporary consciousness studies amply show, there is a peculiar and possibly insurmountable problem with trying to gain knowledge of consciousness: there is a fundamental uncertainty about what it is that one is trying to know something about. The Indian thinkers were well aware that theories of consciousness are matters of intuition retrospectively defended through whatever explanatory power intuition has. While the classical thinkers did not have either the burden or the advantage of having to engage with a scientific study of the physical bases of consciousness, they offered very sophisticated arguments for how consciousness can be conceived. Strikingly, the subject-matter of consciousness (*caitanya* or *citta*) was recognized as a specific field of inquiry; only very recently has modern philosophy in the West done so. Furthermore, the Indian schools agreed that the key identifier of consciousness was its way of signifying its presence to itself. This is what is called phenomenality, the what-is-it-likeness that a subject of consciousness undergoes. The Indians metaphorically called this 'luminosity' (*prakāśata*). This part of the book looks at five different conceptions of luminosity, drawing on a variety of texts from each school of thought considered, to present definitions of each. These definitions allow for straight comparison between

the different schools of thought, and also permit some degree of comparison with contemporary issues. There should be no doubt that Indian discussions of consciousness could make significant contributions to contemporary consciousness studies; and that this is possible even given the profoundly different teleologies involved is the thrust of the concluding argument in this chapter. Nevertheless, this is only a programmatic study, laying down definitions and broadly sketching out the important ideas available in the Indian material, but not yet proceeding to introduce that material into the contemporary debates in a sustained manner. That remains a research project for the near future.

In the last three chapters, I go back to issues that I had considered in a previous book, *Knowledge and Liberation in Classical Indian Thought* (2001a). Here, the treatment is much more closely exegetical, the interpretations oriented to the concerns of the classical tradition rather than contemporary philosophical debates; but I hope they do offer students of Indian thought some new ways of thinking about those traditional concerns. Chapter 3 is a study of the explicit debate between Advaita and Mīmāṃsā over the consequence of (certain types of) knowledge. Advaita takes knowledge to be the instrumental cause of the ultimate end, but cannot deny that actions specified in Vedic ritual must also find a place in the system. Mīmāṃsā claims that specific actions bring about liberation, but reciprocally, cannot deny that such actions need to be informed by knowledge. Obviously, their differing conceptions of liberation as the ultimate end influence their views on the consequences of knowledge, and the relationship between the conception of that end and the knowledge relevant for it is also explored in this chapter. These ideas are presented primarily through the works of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and Śaṅkara. The following chapter is a subsidiary study, concentrating on the effort made by the later Mīmāṃsā thinker Pārthasārathi who, under pressure from the Advaitic arguments for the cognitivity of liberation, attempts to rework his school's system in order to find a place for the persistence of cognitive power in Mīmāṃsā liberation.

Finally Chapter 5 is about a great tension in Mahāyāna Buddhism between the conceptuality-transcending nature of the Buddha's insight and the conceptuality-using nature of his subsequent teaching. There is very much a problem of knowledge here: there must be something that the Buddha went through that gave him knowledge of the Four Noble Truths; yet the analysis of the Mahāyāna school of Yogācāra shows that the awakening he underwent would have had to have been beyond the concepts utilized in knowledge as we understand it (since concepts form the desires that lead to suffering). So, one consequence of knowledge should have been the Buddha's freedom from all concepts, but another consequence was his compassionate return from enlightenment to teach the world of it – and teaching requires concepts! The synthetic Yogācāra-Madhyamaka thinkers, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla draw on ideas of phenomenological and psychological purity to dissolve this tension.

These chapters can be read independently of each other, but I would hope that it is the cumulative impact of the studies – with their very different topics and orientation – that will best convey what I think is the creative potential and analytic sophistication of the classical philosophers of India.

While the last three chapters proceed largely through exegesis, the first two are less tightly bound to specific texts. But I have usually tried to keep the main body of

the text focussed on the classical Indian thinkers, even when comparisons with, and implications for, contemporary Western discussions demand some consideration. These comparative remarks are confined to the footnotes, which are therefore fairly substantial. The aim is to allow those who would rather read the material as purely about ‘classical Indian’ thought to do so by confining their attention to the body of the text. But for those who wish to consider the potential contributions that this classical material can make to contemporary discussions that are dominated by Western thought – whether in critical analysis, political theory, ethics, theology, consciousness studies or epistemology – the footnotes should be useful.

Chapter 1

Multiplist Metaphysics and Ethics

If knowledge has a significant role in soteriological transformation, then the incontrovertible fact that there are incompatible, indeed, conflicting claims to knowledge poses a challenge: how to make sense of these epistemological clashes in the course of determining one's soteriology? Religious philosophies recognize this, and seek to provide an answer. Most settle on refuting competing claims, on the consideration that the course to which they are committed requires showing why others should not be followed. Others try to make sense of competing claims by searching for some level of explanation at which they cease to be incompatible, allowing for many courses of transformation to co-exist legitimately (in epistemological as well as ethical terms).

It seems as if the philosophers of Jainism, despite specific sectarian differences, adopt another strategy altogether. They acknowledge that the claims of different systems of thought are irreducibly incompatible; but they also try to put forward claims that are genuinely specific to themselves and no others. The problem then is that there appears to be no attempt to make sense of these clashes, and a lapse into quiescent relativism results; why then should there be a Jaina position at all? It would require a close exegesis of a variety of Jaina texts to see whether the classical Jaina thinkers were able to provide a cogent defence of their position after all. I do not propose undertaking that strictly Indological project. Instead, I want to argue that Jain philosophical material has the rich potential to develop a metaphysics that does make sense of irreducibly incompatible yet legitimate claims, while also leading to a radically engaged attitude towards other systems, viewpoints or general schema of life.

This chapter attempts to develop a philosophical position derived from my interpretation of the key doctrines of Jaina philosophy; I call it multiplism. It argues that the consequence of knowledge must be an understanding of how a common reality can contain many different and incompatible truths; and motivates a non-violent form of engagement with those who make claims for those truths. It is not always clear that the Jaina philosophers themselves would arrive at the same conclusions as I do; historically, it might well be that Jaina philosophy does not make space for the entirety of the multiplist position. Yet I would also want to suggest that multiplism accords well with the main ethical concerns of Jainism. And even if it is not historically accurate, if it is at all philosophically sustainable, it is sustainable as a Jaina position as well.

Otherness and Non-violence

The Ethical Problematic of Otherness

This exposition works through a largely intuitive notion of Otherness and an outline of a fully non-violent mode of engagement with Otherness. This mode of engagement, which goes beyond – but, I argue, is implied by – Jaina ethics, I call the search for 'affinity' (which also goes beyond the problems and limitations of that classic response to diversity known as 'toleration'). Multiplism is a metaphysics and an ethics that seeks to find the balance between granting the integrity of the Other and attempting to negotiate beyond Otherness.

The metaphysics of multiplism, in so far as it is tied to the conceptual framework of the Jaina philosophers, arises out of the insight into the nature of reality that Mahávira, the main founder of Jainism, had. In that insight, he saw reality in such a way as to feel it necessary to teach a certain form of engagement with it, that is to say, with the world and all its beings. An ethics of Otherness – applied to irreducible difference and the consequences of diversity – is the direct consequence of this knowledge of reality. My interpretation of Jaina metaphysical knowledge and its consequent ethics is a quite general attempt to present a philosophy of non-violent engagement with Otherness.

At once intuitively obvious and conceptually dense, the notion of the 'Other' has become the label for many political and cultural ideas around the world over the past half a century. Rather than get drawn into the rich literature on the subject, I shall try and keep to a largely intuitive understanding of Otherness. The non-intuitive element is given by the stipulation of the term 'schema of life'. I will talk abstractly of the Other as recognizable in some 'schema of life'. This is meant to capture everything from intellectually precise formulations of the ideal life through to unreflectively lived patterns of behaviour and self-representation. It is therefore a rather more general way of talking about stand/viewpoints. Given this, we can say:

> The Other is the (individual[1] or) collective or other personal principle[2] that, in any primary identification of, by and as oneself is not intrinsic to the constitutive identity of that self. The Other is also that which exists in a state held to be inaccessible from within one's own schema of life.

The aim of this working definition is to leave open the possibilities of Otherness. The ramifying power of the notion of the Other has been, of course, that theological, anthropological and biological (and who knows? exospheric) readings of it are possible. I may as well lay my cards on the table and confess that the primary form of Otherness here is cultural, and therefore anthropological. At the same time, there is an interesting imbrication of theological and anthropological Otherness in recent Western thought that should be kept in mind (and is referred to in the discussion of heterology later on).

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1 There is a fundamental sense in which even members of my family are Other, let alone other individuals with more identifiably different identities.

2 God in non-monistic theisms.

The framing of this discussion in terms of Otherness helps to show that, in all honesty, what follows is not an exegetically precise presentation of Jaina ideas but a philosophical position inspired by those ideas. Otherness in itself is not a Jaina concept; but I hope that in what follows, it will be that clear that the Jaina material is well suited to reconstructions that address recent concerns about Otherness. Jaina engagement with irreducible differences in ways of living and the fundamental beliefs that inform them, seems very much to anticipate that concern over alterity which we now theorize as Otherness.

Non-violence

Conventionally, that key term of classical and modern Indian thought, *ahimsa*, is translated as 'non-violence', although doubtless there are many specific contexts in the Jaina codes of conduct in which stricter translations, such as 'non-injury', may be more appropriate.[3] Jaina philosophy consistently argues that violence (*himsa*) is the cause of all that is not virtuous (*adharma*), and defines violence powerfully and quite generally as causing suffering (*duḥkha*) to living beings.[4] This generality goes well beyond intentional acts that cause suffering; it includes even watching but not intervening in violence.[5] While this conception of violence is far-reaching, there is a pragmatic Jaina distinction between intentional violence (even if only intended or endorsed) and the less culpable violence that is the accidental result of otherwise scrupulous actions carried out responsibly.[6] The latter mitigates the radically wide range of consequences that Jainas consider to be violent, such as treading on insects while walking, and keeps the moral focus on less logically extreme but still very general construals of violence.

Both violence and non-violence are read in this very general way, extending beyond the issue of physical harm to many more diffuse and abstract practices, including thinking and feeling. This is not to deny the significance of physical violence, but to recognize that it is brought about because of non-physical preconditions. A section of the vow of non-violence taken by Jaina monks, from one of their earliest texts, shows a keen awareness of the nature of non-physical violence:[7]

> The free mendicant monk explores his mind. If his mind is sinful; blameworthy; intent on attachment; prone to act on impulse; produces cutting and splitting (division and dissent), quarrels, faults and pain; injures living beings or kills creatures, he should not employ such a mind in action …

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3 Jaini 1979, pp. 8, 53.

4 The 13th-century commentator Bhāskarānandi on the authoritative *Tattvārthasūtra*; Bhāskarānandi 1944, VII.13, p. 161.

5 This is the interpretation of the modern commentator, Krishnaraja Shastri, on the 11th-century text, the *Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya* of Amṛtacandrasūri; Zydenbos 1999, fn. 33.

6 Williams 1983, p. 66.

7 *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, II.15.1 from the 4th-century BCE, in Jacobi 1884, p. 203. (When quoting translations, I have occasionally modified them in keeping with the original.) The disposition to violence (*bhāvahiṃsā*) – violence in thought and being – dominates Jaina discussion of violence as such; see Bhargava 1968, p. 106ff., for a summary.

The Jainas from the beginning took this wide act of restraint as verily an 'unchangeable, eternal law/nature of things (*dharma*)'.[8] The epistemic range of violence is clear in the Jaina habit of categorizing the telling of lies under acts of violence.[9] Non-violence, however, is more than just the absence of violence, for the negation ('non') is not merely negative but has the implication that something replaces and fills the absence of violence. While non-violence undeniably has a negative form – forbearance from violence – its substantive conceptualization lies in its positive form, which is to do something and act in certain ways.

Through the course of this study and reinterpretation, we will see that this overarching commitment to a general practice of non-violence is dictated by a metaphysics that combines robust pragmatism about the diversity of the world with a radical re-imagining of the bases of that diversity. Paradoxically, however, the very concern for Others is ethically founded on attention to oneself in Jainism. Non-violence is understood in classical Jainism as a form of self-discipline, rather than primarily a 'charitable affair'.[10] Of course, non-violence is the supreme virtue only because of the nature of the world, constituted as it is by the endless diversity of Otherness (an exploration of which idea will occupy much of the rest of this chapter); but its practice should be undertaken as cultivation of one's own virtue and not as the amelioration of the world's suffering. There is an apparent paradox in the fact that non-violence is what it is only because it is directed at Others, and yet one is non-violent for one's own sake.

A little thought, though, shows this to be entirely consistent. Non-violence consists in not overcoming the Other and homogenizing it within one's own schema of life; a claim that we will soon examine. It follows that the change in the conditions of the Other should not be the end towards which one practices non-violence, for that would imply that one is willing to arrogate on oneself the right to change the Other's life. Regarding the Other, non-violence should be an end in itself, undertaken just for the sake of ruling out one's being in any way the cause of suffering (including letting suffering happen by doing nothing). Non-violence, thus negatively construed with regard to the Other, simply (!) creates the space in which the Other can flourish. However, this is an inadequate teleology for non-violence: surely there is something that motivates the practice of non-violence? The classical and strict Jaina argument is that non-violence should be undertaken for the purpose of purifying oneself;[11] I would gloss this as non-violence for the sake of being maximally in accord with the multiplex world in which one finds oneself. But precisely this modest ambition of self-discipline is what realizes non-violence in its truest form. It shows that one

8 *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, I.4.1, in Jacobi 1884, p. 36.

9 For example, the medieval Jain philosopher, Amṛtacandra Sūri 1933, vv. 91–101, 45–7; especially v. 99: 'violence is, certainly, found in falsehood'. Verse 98 lists speech that causes 'uneasiness, fear, hostility, grief, quarrels or mental anguish' as violent and 'loveless'.

10 Zydenbos 1999, p. 201, quotes a number of classical and contemporary Jaina sources on this point. I am indebted to Zydenbos for his engrossing exploration of various aspects of Jaina non-violence, although I am not sure he would follow me in my interpretation of his scholarly material.

11 Ibid.

imposes the teleology of one's schema (namely, that reality is such that general non-violence is appropriate towards it) only upon oneself; only oneself is disciplined by the purpose for which non-violence is undertaken. The positive construal of non-violence as a logical element in a schema of life is applied only to oneself. If, as a result of practising non-violence, others are transformed and there is 'an awakening of sympathy due to the educative value of non-violence',[12] that is a freely inspired change in the Other, not an imposition of one's values on that Other.

Non-violence, then, is towards Others, but for oneself. But what role does non-violence play in different modes of approaching the Other? We shall look at liberalism and pluralism as two approaches to the Other, and introduce multiplism as the Jaina-inspired candidate for going beyond these two in the comprehensiveness and metaphysical rationale it offers for a radically non-violent engagement with Otherness.

Violence and the Modes of Approaching the Other

Let me now turn to my proposed taxonomy of modes of relationship with the Other. They are:

1. homogenization: the overcoming of the Other;
2. exclusion: the negative recognition of the Other;
3. pluralism: the acknowledgement of the Other;
4. multiplism: seeking affinity with the Other.

I hold (1) and (2) to be violent modes of approach, even if sometimes only intellectually; and (3) is morally set against violence but partakes of an ontology that is uncomfortably shared with (2) and therefore problematically proximate to violence. I am not taking it as self-evident that violence is 'bad' or morally wrong while non-violence is 'good' or morally right. Violent people, especially in the cause of religion, would not admit that their violence was bad or wrong; indeed, they would say it was right. And there may be a case for thinking that violence is required for the attainment of some more powerful and pervasive end, such as equality or justice. Instead, I am simply saying that the path of engagement I suggest is taken through non-violence. That is to say, the values I seek, I prefer to do so through non-violence. I shall bracket the direct and separate issue of whether violence is justifiable ('good') or not, and why non-violence is good in itself. Rather, I shall contrast what I take to be violence with the non-violent attitude I propose, and leave the further moral argument for its intrinsic worth merely implied.[13]

12 Tatia 1988, p. 14.

13 For a rigorous philosophical exploration of the defence of political violence, especially in the context of injustices like fatality-inducing inequality, see Honderich 1980.

Overcoming the Other

Homogenization follows from the conviction that one's schema of life is naturally and/or rationally to be valorized and secured. Homogenization itself, in consequence, is the forcing or the inviting of other schemas to be dispensed with in a transition to the valorized one. Crucially for the description I give here, although there is a variety of ways in which homogenization may be sought and secured, the end is the same. On a different agenda, the differences in the ways to homogenization might well be crucial: persuasion rather than force, the promise of freedom rather than the threat of damnation, economic opportunity rather than political manipulation. But my present concern is with the more diffuse issue of homogenization per se. Here, the pluralist or the multiculturalist will differ ideologically, in the concern to celebrate (and shore up) Otherness, as much from the classical Western liberal as from the theocrat or the conservative monoculturalist. Those who accept positive Otherness, then, see it as a necessary response to homogenization. The schematic integrity of the Other – the right to preserve internally available (if not always chosen) criteria of identity and boundaries – is threatened by homogenization. (For Others at the receiving end of homogenization, there is a taking away of autonomy. That is the essential irony of classical liberalism: it exalts a form of autonomy while denying that there may be alternative, culturally embedded and therefore differently expressed, forms of it.)

Homogenization gets off the ground only through recognizing and deciding which schemas are not to be valorized. This can be an elaborate cataloguing exercise (as has been the case with projects driven by the imperatives of the Enlightenment). But it can also be xenologically lazy (as in the dismissal of 'barbarians', 'foreign devils', 'the Third World', 'asylum-seekers', and the like). Homogenization requires thinking of one's (individual or collective) self in contrast to the devalued Other: only then does it follow that the Other can be invited into one's form of life or to share one's identity. (In this abstract context, I am setting aside the further and concrete question of whether the homogenized ex-Other will ever truly benefit from losing Otherness; or indeed, whether the Other ever loses the markers of Otherness.[14])

To simplify my task, I want to set aside forms of homogenization that manifestly involve physical violence. Instead, let me take as a potent example what has often been thought of as the ultimate homogenizing transformation, at the end of history: classical Western liberalism, set against the broader theme of humanism.[15] Liberalism

14 For all that he had his own version of Occidentalist universalism, Sartre was right in noting of the colonized Other (Sartre 1967, p. 1): the effect of colonialism was 'to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours'.

15 Arguably, liberalism understood beyond the specific context of a political dispensation is tantamount to the humanism born of the Enlightenment. Humanism assumes that there is a universally applicable conception of human nature; but the problem is that that conception is seen as both chronologically originary from, and culturally original to, a specific (non-universal) collective lifeworld (ascribed simply to Western Europe or the West). The distinctive historical and material contradictions of this liberal humanism, of course, have been the subject of much critical attention. In our context, the violence of this philosophical conception should also be noted (Goodman 1997, pp. 159–88).

– at least in its ideal form, if not its self-contradictory manifestations in state policy – certainly rejects Othering for moral reasons, because it hold the consequences of Othering to be undesirable and/or wrong. But it also worries about the Other as a general category, and is sceptical of any programme that asserts such a category's viability and worth. Instead, it tends to support projects in which Otherness is overcome, by inviting the Other into one's own way of life, a way conceptualized as being open to the acceptance of anyone who takes up the invitation.[16] Its proponents claim that it allows sufficient goods and sufficient access to it as compensates for any likely unhappiness that the Other will have over loss of identity.[17] But this makes the debate purely one over instrumental advantages, rather than one over the deep issue of what it implies about the diversity of lived schemas that make for Otherness. (This point is illustrated by noting that it is perfectly possible for values exalted by classical Western liberalism to exist or be realized in other cultural and historical contexts; there could be diversity of origins and social form compatible with the encoding of common ethical ideals. But triumphalist Western liberalism does not recognize multiple realizability, asserting instead that, if the values it privileges are to be found at all, they are found in its specific context. The search for affinity is reduced to the assimilation of the Other.)

What this triumphal notion of liberalism does imply is that there is justification for seeking to obliterate Otherness, for starting with the presupposition that what is not found in one's worldview must eventually be set aside. Classical Western liberalism commits, minimally, the intellectually violent act of denying the freedom of Others to preserve other schemas of life.[18]

16 The specific philosophical formulation involves liberalism's focus on a certain conception of the individual as the proper locus of rights to a way of life. That conception is culturally loaded because of its aetiology in a specific Western European and American context. Not only collective conceptualizations of a way of life – the focus of communitarian philosophy – but also other ways of affirming selfhood (my concern here) are ignored at best and usually rejected. A notable example of individualist liberalism that ignores diversity is the work of John Rawls (Rawls 1993, p. 29ff.). For example, individual citizens are 'self-authenticating sources of valid claims'; p. 32. Charles Taylor (Taylor 1985, p. 197) makes the standard case that that liberalism's atomistically conceived society ignores cultural specificity.

17 Eventual homogenization ('assimilation') is instinctively part of liberalism's teleology, even when nuanced treatment of the Other ('groups') is recommended. An example is Glazer 1978, p. 98.

18 There are, of course, valiant attempts to reconcile liberalism with cultural plurality, which is, after all, an issue of Otherness. One of the best examples is Kymlicka 1989, especially Ch. 9. His key arguments turn on the possibility of sustaining harmony between individual and collective rights; this simply amounts to an engagement with communitarianism. But the axis of that debate sits differently from the issue here. Since communitarianism can equally well leave no space for the multiplicity of Otherness, communitarians are not clear on what they mean when they demand that aliens (Others) 'pursue cultural and political membership' (e.g. Tichenor 1998, p. 293).

There are, of course, more subtle ways of being a universalist, incorporating diversity within a single schema.[19] On such a model, 'truth', 'reality' and so on can be granted as being multiple, care being taken to avoid a simple, culturally presupposed form of homogenization. But the treatment of the Other's Otherness – of schemas of life, which is tantamount to the common idea of lifeworld – is subject to an apparently non-cultural idea of truth that is indeed universalist.[20] At worst, it is simply hidden homogenization; although it should also be granted that such a metaphysical notion of truth could be offered on non-violent grounds, or on the grounds that practically all schemas intuitively start with this presupposition.[21] But, in whatever way it gets going, this universalization ends with a choice, neither of which seems acceptable. The lifeworlds/schemas of life can be classified in a hierarchy; or they can be tolerated.[22] The former combines – however ingeniously – homogenization with exclusion. The use by the latter option of 'toleration' in the conventional sense only amounts to an acceptance of a cultural ontology of pluralism – the nature and consequences of which I will explore later.[23]

I should also add that I have used terms for this process that deliberately sound harsh, in order to sensitize the reader to the violent nature of even the purely epistemic enterprise of reading privileged value into one's own schema of life. A more oblique understanding of this approach may be given by thinking of it as 'normalization':[24] a creation of conditions under which one's values are set up to function as the norm, so as to ignore both the practices and the principles of the Other. The de facto and de jure occidentalism of many elements of international law, for example, function in this way to wipe out the very issue of the legitimacy of unreformed diversity. This is perhaps a more remote way of describing the process adverted to here, but I retain the specific term, 'homogenization', frankly, for its rhetorical clarity.

19 A leading example of this is Haberamas (Jay 1988, p. 128). Increasingly, sophisticated forms of liberalism appear to allow for the practical realities of pluralism, as presented by the multiculturalization of hitherto racially (and to a lesser extent, culturally) homogenous Western societies. In such liberalisms, the essential differences of pluralism are reworked as social variables, leaving cultural diversity subordinated to a universalized individualism; Kenny 2004. This individualism turns out, on examination, to be a quite culturally specific articulation of a set of values based on a metaphysics and political theory of selfhood arising in early modern Western thought. Other conceptions of selfhood do not so naturally lead to this particular form of generic individualism (some might lead to other forms of individualism and yet others to non-individualistic settlements; Ram-Prasad 2005, Ch. 2).

20 Habermas 1987, p. 57, passim.

21 Op cit., p. 58.

22 Habermas 1993, p. 122.

23 Pluralists have recognized that Habermasian strategies of developing 'consensus' and the like do seek to overcome diversity. But they wonder whether it is sufficient merely to preserve diversity without also fostering it (Rescher 1993).

24 This equation is due to Paul Fletcher, in conversation.

Excluding the Other

Exclusion shares with homogenization the unambiguous rejection of the intrinsic worth of the Other. It is, of course, much more clearly an act of intellectual violence; and it is the attitude that drives collective and systematic physical violence. By ‘exclusion’, I mean the use of defining – and identifying – what one is not as a correlate of the definition of one’s own collective identity. The Other becomes a negative necessity, that which must be set apart and kept apart for one’s own sense of (collective) self to be sustained. The need for separation is vital to the continued viability of one’s identity; therefore, there is a willingness to preserve the separation at high cost – to the Other. The truth of one’s own schema is reiterated through the assertion of the untruth of the Other’s schema; indeed, the contrast becomes constitutive of the special value of the former. I take it that it is too obvious to need pointing out that exclusionism is marked by a profound ethical disorientation. The task with the delineation of exclusion is better framed as a highly specific engagement on instrumental grounds with its proponents, since the starting-point of the exclusionist is a conviction in the rightness of Othering. In this chapter, however, I confess that I take myself to be preaching to believers of non-exclusion.

The Cultural Ontology of Acknowledging Otherness

There is a different form of liberalism, which is thinner in its commitments to a set of values that have to be accepted by the Other. It thinks of itself as liberal in the sense that it is relaxed about what values it accepts. This form of liberalism is more accurately understood as pluralism.[25] In fact, recent conceptions of pluralism have tended to define themselves against liberalism.[26]

Pluralism can often be simply the acknowledgement of Otherness, a recognition that there is a cultural ontology of diversity. It is then that the question arises as to how pluralism comes close to exclusionary Othering. Simple pluralism shares with exclusivist ontology a conviction that cultural diversity is non-negotiable, that schemas of life are fundamentally monadic in their separateness. In other words, pluralism takes the incontestable experience of alterity and reifies it. This is not to deny that the pluralist may have an attitude to the Other that is diametrically opposed to that of the exclusivist; but their argument is merely over the estimation and value of alterity, not its givenness or the justifiability of engaging with it. My suggestion is that pluralism of this variety attempts to secure the negative non-violence of

25 The basic argument for the claim that pluralism is incompatible with liberalism is that the latter regards certain values (even granted that they are procedural rather than substantive) as overriding, and asks for the defeat of conflicting ones. Pluralism, by contrast, asks for a plurality of conflicting values to be guaranteed (Kekes 1993, pp. 213–15). Arguments that the two are compatible generally tend to claim that liberalism has the procedures for allowing compromise on plurality; Bellamy 1999, pp. 91–140, but this merely instrumentalizes the acceptance of plurality. Liberal homogenization is deferred in the face of Otherness. In light of these considerations, it would seem better to distinguish between the two.

26 For example, Katznelson 1996, pp. 102–4.

forbearing from harming the Other, but it cannot do more (and does not seek to do more), because it has settled on the ontology of alterity and cannot see what more can be done.[27] This is no insubstantial achievement: I would personally be glad to live a consistently pluralist life. But in the ideality of our discussion, simple pluralism does not have the resources to say why exclusion is to be resisted, why violence is to be withheld. Simple pluralism, in the end, takes the 'is' of experienced Otherness and forces an 'ought' of acknowledgement of alterity out of it: the world is actually thus and we must therefore accept it as so.

Pluralism is the endorsement of Otherness. Crucially, it is not a process of Othering, but an acceptance of claims of Otherness. Encountering an apparent cultural ontology of diverse collectives, aware of the painful history of both the denial of the integrity of identity, and its forcible re-inscription on the Other, pluralism is sensitive to the counter-claims of Otherness. The Othered seek to repossess their identity and reclaim their schema of life, and do so by retrieving identities that were denied and schemas that were de-valorizing when they were forcibly re-inscribed. Pluralism celebrates the search and the attainment of that end. It asserts a shared ontology of diversities; and if that implies monadic distinction of (re)ressentialized identities and (re)possessed schemas, that is only to be expected in the moral calculus of experience.[28]

Pluralism's recognition of the Other is not violent. But it shares a cultural ontology with exclusion, and its acceptance of the givenness of the Other leaves underdeveloped its strategy for negotiating through the violence of both the act of Othering and its forcible overcoming. Acceptance of a cultural ontology of diversity is, for pluralism, self-evident: that ontology is true and hence its acceptance is right. So, what to do when either that ontology is sought to be overcome (as in homogenization), or is not seen as calling for reinforcement (as in exclusion)? Nothing but the protestation of the self-evidence of its position appears possible. Multiplism shares with pluralism its humane response to the affirmations made by the Other; but by making acceptance of Otherness the self-evident response to the diversity of collectives – something that is not likewise self-evident to the exclusionist who shares the same ontology – it provides less scope for strategizing a properly non-violent response to exclusion.[29]

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27 The classic 20th-century Western articulation of this position is by Isiah Berlin, for example, Berlin 1991, p. 80.

28 Pluralism that seeks to marry a Kantian notion of persons as agents of value ('valuers') with multiculturalism may be able to motivate sensitivity to other cultures (Hill 2000, p. 183). Such a perspective uses 'humanity itself' (Hill 2000, p. 87) as the source of universal value to generate acceptance of a plurality of values. However, while the moral attitude towards diversity here would resemble that of multiplism, the latter has a different metaphysics of Otherness that I want to suggest generates the relevant moral attitude in a more coherent manner.

29 It may well be that certain strategies for evolving engagement between different religions often classify themselves as pluralistic, but are similar to the multiplism I now describe. Such a resemblance is apparent only because, for the sake of continuing 'dialogue', they wisely defer coming to a metaphysical conclusion, since they realize that the metaphysics of diversity available to them is unhelpful. This is my reading of some of Harold Coward's good-hearted efforts (Coward 1985, Ch. 6).

Some cogent versions of pluralism accept that it should do more than simply acknowledge difference. Diversity of perspectives calls for a rational engagement from within one perspective with others.[30] Procedurally, this should result in a 'benevolent acquiescence in differences', an 'other-respecting spirit of live-and-let-live' that is 'inherently benign and productive'.[31] While this approach comes far closer to that of multiplism, it differs in two ways. One, it does not offer a metaphysical account of how diversity exists in a common world, as multiplism seeks to do. Two, while attempting engagement, it still functions primarily in terms of a friendly rivalry with Otherness, while the radical non-violence that multiplism advocates calls for a far richer relationship with Otherness (that I call affinity).

I will now attempt an outline of a non-violent mode of approaching Otherness, which creates the scope for a morally ambitious response to the Other.

Multiplist Metaphysics and Non-violence

The approach that I term 'multiplism', then, is based on a reading of the philosophy of the Indian religion of Jainism.[32] Multiplism seeks to realize its end non-violently. What is this end? Therein lies the great challenge. There is a world of vivid and disputatious alterity. Otherness must speak and be listened to, so that there is a coming to terms with each other that preserves difference in schemas of life.[33] Our tour of approaches to Otherness will have alerted us to the dilemmatic challenge: how are we to avoid the overcoming of Otherness through homogenization, and yet not reify the Other as forever ontologically separated from us? Multiplism attempts to stabilize the dialectic between liberal universalism's pursuit of commonality and pluralism's respect for diversity. Multiplism's preference for non-violent modes of proceeding through a world of experienced diversity itself causes it to face that challenge. Overcoming Otherness requires violence, while merely being contented with the givenness of the Other is at most to forgo violence but no more. Multiplism wishes to convert non-violence into a positive act of engagement.

This preference for non-violence is not merely a choice of means. There is a coherence, indeed, a unity of means and ends, wherefore non-violence is required to attain an ultimate coming-to-terms with reality because that reality itself is such as to become available only through epistemic non-violence. There is, then, a metaphysical concern behind non-violence.[34]

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30 Nicholas Rescher calls this 'perspectival rationalism'; Rescher 1993, p. 114.

31 Ibid., p. 126.

32 Ram-Prasad 2001b. Independently, Piotr Balcerowics has used the term 'multiplexity of reality' to characterize an aspect of Jaina philosophy without, however, systematically enunciating what he means by this; see his scholarly and logically precise exploration of Jaina doctrine in Balcerowics 2002.

33 A classic early example in Jainism is in *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, I.7.1 (Jacobi 1884, pp. 62–3). While holding themselves to be the followers of Mahāvīra, they nonetheless frankly acknowledge and describe diversity, by saying of people: 'they thus differ and profess their individual persuasion ...'

34 Mahatma Gandhi, whose mother was Jain, and whose own philosophy was deeply informed by his understanding of Jaina non-violence, once said: 'Violence hides Truth and if

To put it briefly, multiplism thinks reality is multiply realizable.[35] For example, the highest good is conceptualized in radically different ways in different schemas of life. Multiplism holds that it is not incoherent to maintain both that (i) these different ways are irreducible to a higher-order universal; and (ii) the validity of one does not imply the invalidity of others. (For example, multiplism would consider as misguided in its exclusionism, the entire debate on the nature of mystical experience – that is, whether the validity of all accounts is secured only through a deeper commonality or whether the validity of one alone (or none) is to be asserted to avoid contradiction.)

Multiplism suggests that elements of different schemas of life can:

1. make claims to reality that cannot cohere with each other; and yet
2. equally hold/be true of that reality.

Reality can allow of this difference of truthfulness. Of course, there is a dogmatic metaphysics of soteriology – tied strictly to the supremacy of the lessons taught by the Jaina teachers – behind the specific Jaina strategy of multiplist engagement with Otherness. But it should be noted that the argument for multiplism is a transcendental one in itself: the multiplism of reality explains the experience of complex and non-coherent diversity, their mutual irreducibility and – importantly – the truthfulness and integrity of the constitutive elements of diversity. If reality is multiplist, then experience can be explained in this way. There is scope, then, to read the Jaina case (the transcendental argument) for multiplism in this more modest sense, so that it is more a descriptive metaphysics[36] than a dogmatic metaphysics. That is to say, multiplism should be seen as saying that a multiplist reality would explain experience of alterity and difference, rather than that reality must be multiplist if

you try to find Truth by Violence you will betray horrible ignorance in the search for Truth, and, therefore, Non-Violence without any exception whatsoever, I have come to realise, is the essence of life' (quoted in Prabhu 1952, p. 102). It must, however, be acknowledged that Gandhi's conception of non-violence, as a 'force of truth' (his translation of *satyāgraha*, which more literally means the 'grasping of truth') deliberately forged to transform the politics of India, seeks actively to change Otherness. Howsoever dramatic its ethical dimension, his non-violence is grounded in a monistic metaphysic of a common ultimate truth (even if only partially understood by each person) that is different from multiplism. He does partially preserve the traditional Jaina idea of non-violence as primarily a mode of self-cultivation which, in its modest refusal to impose discipline on others manifests a thoroughgoing non-violence towards those others.

35 One acute modern commentator on Jainism puts it thus: 'there is not only diversity, but each real is equally diversified' (Mookerjee 1944, p. 70). I take 'diversity' to be an attempt to pick out the same idea as 'multiplicity', although it does not function programmatically in Mookerjee's work.

36 On the idea of descriptive metaphysics and its relationship with transcendental arguments, see Strawson 1982, p. 50. For the Indian context and parallels, see Ram-Prasad, 2002a, pp. 28–31.

experience is to be of alterity and difference. A constructive metaphysics of cultural ontology is required to motivate the ethical engagement with the Other.[37]

Multiplism does not take the diversity presented in experience to form an ultimate ontology of monadic, self-contained (and possibly, disengaged) difference. That is why it is not pluralism. Neither does it collapse into a monistic ontology that reduces difference to oneness; that is what is meant by saying that reality is multiply realisable. For the moment, suffice it to say that this worldview informs the multiplist approach to Otherness.

The Principles of Multiplism: An Interpretation of Jaina Metaphysics and Ethics

We will now look in detail at the three animating principles of a Jaina-inspired theory of multiplism: conditionality (*syādvāda*), multiplicity (*anekāntavāda*; lit.: non-onesidedness), and circumscribed schemas (*nayavāda*).

The doctrine of conditionality is the starting point of this theory. The conflict between self and Other is sought to be reworked through this method (and that it is a method devoted to engaging meaningfully – non-violently – with conflicting schemas will be the thrust of my interpretation of it). When all epistemic processes of resolution have been completed, and irreducible alterity remains in schemas of life, the multiplist must somehow record an understanding of how reality allows such conflicting – mutually irreducible – schemas, with their own characteristic and constitutive statements of position, to remain true. But the point about conflict is that each Other holds true to something that is not true to anOther. What one affirms, the other denies. Not being a pluralist, the multiplist is not content with merely noting the diversity of truth-claims; they seek to acknowledge a common reality in which different claims hold true. But that, of course, immediately implies a contradiction, since the multiplist appears to assert both the truth and the falsehood (assuming that these are the only truth-values) of the same statement, reading the denial of a statement as an assertion of its falsehood.

Perhaps no other aspect of the Jainas' philosophy caused so much controversy as their attempt to maintain that, in some way, a statement and its denial could both hold true. But since this is an exercise in interpreting Jaina material, the proponent of multiplism, whatever further features it has, must certainly incorporate the Jaina doctrines. *Syādvāda* has to be interpreted in a way that makes it consistent. If it is shown to be consistent, then it obviously fulfils an important function within multiplism, because it establishes that there is some coherent way of simultaneously acknowledging the legitimacy of irreducible differences within the same reality.

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37 I am therefore not entirely sure why there need be or how there can be a transcendental argument for a foundation of ethical principles without a metaphysics, as Karl Apel argues is required (Apel 1999, p. 158). But Apel appears to think that metaphysics can only be dogmatic, and in that sense, my use of the descriptive/dogmatic distinction may sidestep some of his concerns.

Syādvāda and the Logic of Conditionality

Kundakunda, possibly the first independent Jaina thinker after the formation of the canonical texts, writes:[38]

> If a thing is viewed from different aspects of reasoning, it may be described in the following statements: conditionally it is, conditionally it is not, conditionally it is both, conditionally it is inexpressible, conditionally it is and it is inexpressible, conditionally it is not and it is inexpressible, conditionally it is and it is not and it is inexpressible.

Crucially, I have translated as 'conditionally' the prefix '*syāt*'.[39] But there has been much uncertainty over how to translate (and therefore read) this prefix, which obviously modifies what would otherwise be a plainly silly claim on the part of the Jainas. For a representative sample: it has been translated as 'may be' by, for example, S.N. Das Gupta,[40] K.N. Jayatillake[41] and S. Gopalan,[42] and 'relatively speaking' by Chandradhar Sharma.[43] These will not do.

The Advaitin, Śaṅkara, offers two main objections to *syādvāda* that are standard to the critics of the Jainas: the doctrine involves (i) contradiction (*virodha*) and (ii) doubt (saṃ*śaya*).[44] Though others, including the Jainas themselves, have added to the list,[45] these are the fundamental problems. Translating '*syāt*' as 'may be' is exactly what suggests the criticism that the Jainas are doubtful of their commitment to a position, and are thus merely uncertain about their philosophy, rather than having a position of their own. 'Relatively speaking' begs the question of what is relative to what, the issue which is precisely in question at this point. Of course, these writers recognize the challenges, and attempt to interpret the doctrine to meet the criticism, but they are, in the first instance, hardly helped by their choice of translation. Matilal's interpretation is based on a later Jaina philosopher, Samantabhadra's identification of '*syāt*' with '*kadācit*' and '*kathāñcit*',[46] which he thinks ought to be translated in this technical context as 'under a certain condition'.[47]

Taking 'conditional' as the translation, the sevenfold system becomes:

1. Conditionally, x is.
2. Conditionally, x is not.
3. Conditionally, x gradually/non-simultaneously is and is not.
   [3'. Conditionally, x is and x is not.

38 Kundakunda 1964, p. 9.
39 Ganeri translates it as either 'conditionally' or 'arguably' (Ganeri 2002, p. 269).
40 Das Gupta 1922, p. 180.
41 Jayatillake, 1963.
42 Gopalan 1973, p. 152.
43 Sharma 1976, p. 52.
44 Śaṅkara 1938, II.2.33, pp, 559–62.
45 Vidyānanda 1915, p. 227; Prabhācandra 1941, p. 156.
46 Samantabhadra 1914, v. 104.
47 Matilal 1981, p. 53.

4. Conditionally, x simultaneously is and is not.
   [4'. Conditionally, x is inexpressible.]
5. 1 and 4.
6. 2 and 4.
7. 3 and 4.

I shall take it that 'x is' is the statement that *p*, and 'x is not' is the statement that *not-p*.

The Failure of Conventional Interpretations

Leaving aside the issue of the difference between non-simultaneous (*kramarpana*) and simultaneous (*saharpana*) applications, it is clear that (3) and (4) are equally problematic, and for the same reason: they obviously run up against the charge of contradiction (*virodha*). Here, contradiction must be understood as one theory (or more generally, a schema) holding the single thesis that it is the case that '*p* and *not-p*'. (It must be noted that the Jaina method is seen as being contradictory in this strict way rather than, more loosely, by holding both the thesis that it is the case that *p* and the thesis that it is the case that *not-p*. Indeed, if it can be argued that, somehow, the Jaina method is only committed to the latter form, then the charge of contradiction would not work, since Indian philosophers in general are aware that the latter form is a mere accommodation of diversity and do not think of it as a contradiction.) The standard interpretation of the Jaina defence is:[48]

1. they believe in a 'complex' reality, whose complexity consists in its being incomprehensible from any one point of view;
2. in consequence, many points of view are taken to be required to comprehend this reality;
3. from this it is supposed to follow that the multiplicity of views includes views which have the appearance of contradiction.

In conclusion, it is held that there is only an appearance of contradiction, since the complexity of reality 'admits of opposing predicates from different standpoints'[49] and that for this reason, no 'definite view of reality can be taken'.[50]

As it stands, this response does not rebut the criticism. There ought to be no problem with the possibility of multiple points of view; that is, one could easily grant (1) and (2) without logical qualms. The problem lies in the transition from (2) to (3). Multiple views in themselves are logically unproblematic, as they can be held without violating any standard of rationality. It is too obvious to defend: for,

48 The classical Jainas clearly identify the charge of contradiction and set out to refute it; a competent summary of these efforts is given in Uno 2000, p. 57, fn. 9.

49 Sharma 1976, p. 52. Sharma specifically defines opposition of predicates as the affirmation and negation of a judgment – which looks clearly to imply contradiction – before denying that this is contradiction.

50 Gopalan 1973, p. 152.

of course a painting is a work of art, a collection of paint on canvas, the property of the owner, a rectangle, and so on. There is nothing philosophically difficult with this point about an irreducible multiplicity of qualities. But it is problematic to claim that complexity consists in the possibility of validly affirming and negating the same proposition.

The proponents of the conventional modern interpretation recognize that it would be logically incoherent to take affirmation and negation (the application of 'opposing' predicates) as contradiction, for they deny that there is contradiction. The usual suggestion made to avoid contradiction is that if *x* were a pot, then, the propositions, 'the pot is (exists)' and 'the pot is not (does not exist)' are only **apparently** contradictory.[51] This is simply to assert that a pot **is** a pot ('from the point of view of its own substance'), whereas a pot **is not** cloth or wood ('from the point of view of other substances'); so too, a pot **is**, here and now, but a pot **is not**, in some other time and place.

However, this implies intellectual dishonesty on the part of the proponent of conditionality. All this interpretation does is make it seem as if '*x* is' and '*x* is not' are not, as they initially appear, well-formed formulae representing propositions predicating existence ('is') and non-existence ('is not') of *x*, but, rather, disguised versions of an incomplete predicative propositional formula, which ought really to be read as two versions of the same partially formed predicative '*x* is ...' (i.e. '*x* is F', '*x* is not-G', and so on.) That is to say, 'isness' and 'is-notness' are not the predicates but some other, hitherto unmentioned 'F-ness' and 'not-G-ness'.[52] But if this were the case, then, not only is there no contradiction, there are no 'opposing' predicates either, for obviously, F and not-G are not in any sense opposed, and merely two of a list of *x*'s qualifiers. They imply no epistemologically significant 'point of view' (i.e. schema), only a list of qualities. This makes it seem as if the Jainas, while pretending to offer a genuine resolution of conflict between the complete views of opposing sides, are in reality only suggesting that conflict occurs due to incomplete consideration of qualities from the same point of view.[53]

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51 Das Gupta 1922, p. 179ff; Gopalan 1973, p. 153ff.

52 Although I use 'F' and 'G' as is usual in predicate calculus, we should keep in mind that the Indian notion of a qualifier does not map exactly on to the Western notion of a predicate.

53 It is sad that even Padmarajiah's exceptionally detailed and patient exposition of Jaina philosophy should be marred by a similar problematic interpretation (Padmarajiah 1986, p. 153). Padmarajiah further confounds the situation by comparing his interpretation of this predicate to the 6th-century philosopher of the Mimāṃsā school, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's elucidation of the notion of 'existence' (*sat*). Kumārila is concerned to make a distinction between fictive entities and entities which are absent to cognition (sky-flower as opposed to cloth in the cognition of a pot). So he says of the former that they cannot enter into the content of a cognition, even one which leads to a negative judgment, whereas the latter can enter into the content of a cognition when the judgment is a denial. Then, *cloth* enters into the content of the cognition of *pot* when the subject, looking at a pot, denies that it is cloth. In that sense, every existent entity can enter into the content of the cognition of another existent entity even when it (the former entity) is absent (does not exist) at the time of the cognition of the latter existent. That is why the cognition of a pot can also have the content, *non-cloth*. This is in contrast to fictive entities, which do not give content to cognition. This is a quite different issue from the one

In fact, clearly, the conditional use of *syāt* is meant to provide a synthesis for **opposing** views. But if we go by the examples provided, it seems dishonestly to be resolving opposed views without actually providing relevantly opposed views, for as we saw, the qualifiers in the predication do not carry any oppositional character and so should not be particularly problematic for any one particular school to hold. The point is that in the model provided above, F and not-G can consistently be predicated of *x* from within any one point of view or schema (for example, the Naiyāyikas ought to have no difficulty in incorporating the reading of the pot suggested by Das Gupta and others into their own direct realist ontology).

Two things have to be done, then, if we are to take the Jaina computation of possible propositional combinations seriously as a technique for developing a theory for the resolution of conflict between two schemas:

1. The interpretation should obviously take '*x* is' and '*x* is not' as two well-formed formulae which can be represented as the complete statements *p* and *not-p*.
2. *p* and *not-p* must be entertained respectively by two different schemas (two different cultures, ontologies, traditions, schools, paradigms, and so on), and not be assimilable into one schema, as in the above examples; one must remain different from the Other.

What happens, then, with the standard interpretation is that the charge of contradiction is met only by denying conflict. Without conflict, differences become epistemologically uninteresting. What is so interesting about the assertion that a table is a single entity and is not a single entity, when ordinary language use asserts the former and quantum physics the latter? This interpretation of the Jaina philosophy makes it a small plea for deeper analysis of superficial (often very superficial) differences, but nothing more.

With these considerations in mind, let us go on to look at the possible interpretations of the problematic combinations, (3) and (4) of the sevenfold system. Each interpretation suggests a way in which the differences that mark the Otherness of schemas may be understood.

Two Legitimate and One Illegitimate Scenario of Conditionality Considered

Before embarking on a detailed consideration of the various interpretive possibilities of conditionality, we must distinguish between three situations within which the Jaina way might be thought to be found, only two of which are legitimate. The application of the conditional method differs for these legitimate situations. These are the three:

1. *The epistemic situation* Here, there are rival knowledge-claims, one person, *a*, claiming that *p* is true and another, *b*, claiming that *not-p* is true, where the issue

Padmarajiah is addressing, namely, the simultaneity of complete assertions and denials. The difference should be evident from the following discussion.

is as to which one is correct on a given theory of truth. This is like a dispute in a court case, and not the giving up of the determination of truth. It is not as if that the views of both parties must be asserted without any inquiry into the basis of their knowledge-claims. If the clash is within a particular system (such as the legal system of a country), then it must be the case that one of the claims is correct and the other wrong, since any one system will be valid and consistent only if it disallows contradiction and regulates truth (and, in consequence, meaning). So it must be the case that all attempts must be made to settle such rival claims, before the sevenfold system is applied; nothing in the system requires the suspension of the search for correct answers within an agreed system (as in the epistemological framework of the *pramāṇa* system in classical Indian thought. This way of reading conditionality does not work.

2. *The doxastic situation* This is the sort of situation where it is recognized that there is an irreducible clash of beliefs, irreducible because beliefs are by definition held from within a schema, and the inescapability of that schematicity or 'point-of-viewness' implies that all search for knowledge presupposes a starting point of belief.[54] The conditional method may be seen as referring to such a justified pre-judgmental belief that relates to the schemas of Others. Here, the *syādvāda* is precisely the tool to expose the irreducibility of differing pre-judgmental beliefs in a schema (the starting-point of a point of view, we could say). In adducing the possibilities entertained in (3) and (4), the Jaina sevenfold system may be seen as attempting to make the adherents of rival beliefs sensitive to their own pre-judgmental positions. It does so by showing that there could be conditions (i.e. a certain pre-judgmental position) under which *p* could be asserted and conditions (another such position) under which *not-p* could be asserted. The point is that these conditions are based on a difference presupposed in a theory-laden clash of views, and not one based actually on a rational constitutive element within one single schema.

3. *The systemic situation* Another way of looking at conditionality is to think that it applies to the following sort of situation: *p* and *not-p* are held under well-developed schemas which do not seem reducible to one another. Thus, there is (i) no independent method of determining whether one or the other claim is false (as in (1) above); and there is (ii) no question of just exposing the prejudgmental (and presystemic) basis of a schema (as in (2) above). Instead, there seem to be two schemas, and each seems to be incapable of arriving, through its internally systematic thought, at the conclusions of the other point of view.

One profound difference between (2) and (3) above is that whereas the former is an examination of the confusion which besets believing subjects in the actual world, the latter requires a certain amount of idealization, for it takes each schema to be a well-developed theory, rather than a more diffuse body of culture; for example,

54 This idea recognizes the well-worn hermeneutic maxim of Hans Gadamer, 'all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice', as also a distinction between blind prejudice and 'justified prejudice productive of knowledge' (Gadamer 1975, pp. 239, 247).

it requires a determinate set of theses such as would characterize a classical Indian school of philosophy such as Nyāya or Advaita. Since this would in practice lead to a messy historical examination, we will have to assume that there is a clearly definable point of view. Ultimately, the difference between the doxastic and systemic situations may lie in a fundamental difference of philosophical orientation, where the former involves the understanding of the fact of multiplexity, while the latter involves a commitment to finding out (getting to know) whether multiple views are true simultaneously.

Three Interpretations Formulated

Let us suppose that *a* is an adherent of Schema A ('point of view' A, which is a body of beliefs and commitments to judgements and actions that they entail) and *b* is an adherent of Schema B. Let R stand for reality, such that RA is held by *a*, RB by *b*, and RAB is a common schematic model for *a* and *b*. Then there are three different interpretations of the problematic statement 'Conditionally *x* both (non-simultaneously/simultaneously) is and is not' (i.e. (3) and (4) of the sevenfold conditional system of the Jainas hold):

(i) Perspectivism:
[1] *p* is True under RAB for *a*, under condition *P* given in RAB.
and
[2] *not-p* is True under RAB for *b*, under condition *Q* given in RAB.

(ii) Epistemic Incommensurability:
[1] *p* is True under all conditions given in RAB for *a*, given a further satisfaction requirement *X* for *a*.
and
[2] *not-p* is True under all conditions given in RAB for *b*, given a further satisfaction requirement *Y* for *b*.

(iii) Relativism:
[1] *p* is True under all conditions given in RA for *a*.
and
[2] *not-p* is True under all conditions given in RB for *b*.

These three interpretations seek in different ways to explain why the sevenfold conditional system is not an exercise in contradiction when (3) and (4) are asserted. Each of these seeks to explain how the Jainas are able to assert what they do, and each attempts to give such an explanation by trying to free the conditional method of contradiction. But it remains to be seen whether the threat of contradiction and the removal of it are at all relevant to what the Jainas are saying.

Let us now explore each in turn.

The Inadequacy of Perspectivism

The first interpretation of the *syādvāda* method seeks to avoid the charge of contradiction by claiming that each of the apparently incompatible statements is actually conditioned by a different perspective which, if taken into account, renders the statements non-contradictory:

(i)
[1] *p* is True under RAB for *a*, under condition *P* given in RAB.
[2] *not-p* is True under RAB for *b*, under condition *Q* given in RAB.

This is roughly the interpretation suggested by Matilal.[55] He understands that any interpretation must take the reality of conflict seriously, for it is in the treatment of real conflict that the potential originality of the *syādvāda* method lies. At the same time, the threat of contradiction must be defused, or else the method will collapse into incoherence. Under his perspectival interpretation, *a* and *b* can each subscribe to conditions *P* and *Q*, without fear of contradiction, as *P* and *Q* are internal to (allowed by), and therefore consistent with the commonly held schema RAB. (This is so since a schema – in the narrower sense of a theory – must be consistent with its components, if it is to be a theory at all.) Embroidering on Matilal's use of Peter Strawson's example,[56] one could say of a person that they are both over six feet tall and not over six feet tall. It turns out that the person has a disease which makes them stoop, such that when standing they are under six feet, but were their stoop to be taken into account (by measuring the curvature of his spine), they would be over six feet tall. One may think in this case of *a* as a military sergeant interested in seeing whether the person 'measured up' for the army (and deciding they did not come up to six feet) and *b* as the person's doctor, who is interested in seeing if their disease is getting worse or better. Presumably, they subscribe to a common theory of heights, but cannot assert the other's point, because each takes a different condition as relevant. There is a difference in point of view and the difference is non-trivial. In that case, the Jaina would appear to be able to say that the person is and is not six feet tall, say that without contradiction, and yet say something interesting about the manifoldness of reality.

Other examples could be used to explore the power of this suggestion. It may be asserted that tight money supply is and is not economically efficient; but this can be explained by saying that it may well be efficient in a country under threat of inflation, and not be so in a country in deep recession. Yet it would not be possible for *a* in the inflation-ridden country to assert what *b* in the recession-hit country asserts.

It is clear that *P* and *Q* are interpreted as conditions which may be indexed to time, space or some other requirement, such that *a* and *b*, located in their respective environments, cannot assert what the other does. Yet each could perfectly well allow for the theoretical possibility of the other's assertion being valid, for each assertion

55 Matilal 1981, pp. 59–61.
56 Strawson 1952, pp. 16–19.

is internal to a commonly defined theory (height in physics, monetary policy in economics).

Under this interpretation, the otherness of schemas is taken to be merely difference in perspectives. Each assertion depends on different perspectives, though it is trivially true that each requires a different perspective. This is no more problematic than the clash between someone who says ‘this car is red’ under mercury lights, and one who says ‘it is brown’ under sodium-vapour lights. The difficulty with this interpretation is that it would hardly meet the sort of clash the Jaina method was supposed to resolve, as in the clash between a Nyāya philosopher claiming that a pot was a stable spatio-temporal continuant and a Buddhist claiming it was a conceptual hypostatization on unique, momentary particulars. Perspectivism requires the logical possibility of *a* and *b* recognizing the consistency of the other’s condition – *P* and *Q* respectively – with a common RAB, and the consequent possibility of each making that assertion themselves if and when their condition changed (as it could without contradiction). But it not clear that such a clash as between a realist and a phenomenalist-idealist can be made to fit within perspectivism.

There is still some vantage point in perspectivism, from which we can resolve the issue; ultimately, there is no conflict involved. It would be perfectly consistent for the doctor, were they to be employed to do medical checks by the military, to pronounce that the man in question was not six feet tall after all. In other words, there is nothing inconsistent about adopting the other condition. There is no conflict after all. If there is no conflict, there are no genuine differences in points of view, no schematization of Otherness.

I will give another example to drive home the point. Let there be a view: ‘it is correct to have government subsidies for farmers in the face of international competition’. Then, there is the conflicting view, ‘it is not correct to ...’. The *syādvāda* method would have us say, ‘conditionally, it is correct and it is not correct to ...’. On the interpretation just given, we would say that there is some hidden meaning in this last statement. The suggestion would be that we ought to conditionalize the first two statements, so that they do not conflict; and if they do not conflict, the third statement would not be a contradiction. So, we can assume that there are actually conditions *P* and *Q*. Condition *P* is: ‘there is a vulnerable farming community whose loss of income through the removal of subsidies would threaten the health of the domestic economy’. Condition *Q* is: ‘the farming community is benefiting at the expense of consumers who have to pay higher prices than they would for imported commodities’. Then obviously, both the view under *a*’s schema S*a*: ‘it is correct to have subsidies’ and the view under *b*’s schema S*b*: ‘it is not correct to have subsidies’ can be made without contradiction, so long as the conditionalizing is explicit. The consequence is that it would be consistent to go from adhering to one condition to adhering to the other on the grounds that the situation had changed. It would then become clear that there was no conflict after all. Yet, what is interesting about this apparent difference of opinion, apart from the earnest but obvious call to look more deeply at common, underlying principles? There is no real challenge involved in claims where imposing conditions removes conflict.

The metaphysical fact is that views which do not conflict but merely give the illusion of conflict do not do much for the idea of an irreducibly multiplex reality. A

suitably wide-ranging schema can encompass the apparently conflicting claims. In the example given, surely any good economist can develop a model in which different procedures are allowed, depending on the situation. In the end, if the conflict can be resolved by deeper analysis, that analysis must itself be part of a more powerful theory, and therefore within a particular or single schema itself.

In contrast, look at another version of the above example. Again, let there be a view, 'it is correct to have government subsidies for farmers in the face of international competition'. Then, there is the conflicting claim, 'it is not correct to ...'. The Jaina schema would have us say, 'conditionally, it is correct and it is not correct to ...'. But suppose that the former is given by a protectionist trade theorist and the latter by a free marketeer. The former stands by trade subsidies due to the need to always be independent of foreign sources for vital produce, building long-term competitive advantage even in a currently uncompetitive sector, and so on. The latter stands by their claim because they believe in letting the markets work, and so on. There is no conditionalizing in either theory. There is genuine conflict, just as there would have been in the Jaina philosopher's time between the Buddhist, who maintained that there was no pot because reality consisted of unconceptualizable point-instants, and the Nyāya philosopher, who asserted that there was a pot because reality consisted of mid-sized objects which existed as presented in experience.

Perspectivism therefore does not quite address the deep issue of how the conditional method manages to state non-contradictorily something significant about schemas in conflict with each other.

The Problem with Epistemic Construals of Incommensurability

We now come to the second interpretation. In this, too, the conditional method is sought to be saved from contradiction. Difference of perspective is replaced with difference of criteria: each of *a* and *b* could be working with clashing notions of what constitutes an adequate account of reality under which a statement is true.

(ii)
[1] *p* is True under all conditions given in RAB for *a*, given a further satisfaction requirement *X* for *a*.
[2] *not-p* is True under all conditions given in RAB for *b*, given a further satisfaction requirement *Y* for *b*.

Now, 'under all conditions' amounts to this: since holding that *not-p* contradicts holding that *p*, it is the case that *a* always has to assert that *p* (hold that *not-p* is not true), since in taking *X* as the relevant requirement, one is committed to asserting that *p* (holding that *p* is true). So too *b* cannot consistently assert that *p*.

X and *Y* may be interpreted in a variety of ways, depending on the issue at hand. Thus, suppose *p* is the proposition 'abortion is acceptable'; and RAB is a theory of human welfare. Then the Christian anti-abortionist takes human welfare to be based on God's commandment on the sanctity of life, and thus the life of the foetus, while

the person supporting the right of a woman to choose takes human welfare to be based on a certain construal of personal freedom.

Again, suppose that *a* and *b* are, in that hoary example, an Asande witch-doctor and a Western anthropologist:[57] each interprets the same unfortunate event differently, one as luck and the other as bewitchment (i.e. not-luck), but both use identical logical procedures (RAB) such as *modus ponens* and *modus tollens* to infer from the event to plans for subsequent action.

In both examples, the rival adherents, *a* and *b*, presumably have different criteria of adequacy for what would count for explanation within a theory. The notion of 'criteria of adequacy' here is a version of Thomas Kuhn's idea;[58] *a* has *X* and *b* has *Y* as a set of criteria for adequate explanation of a set of features which they agree on. It should be possible to see the Nyāya-Buddhism stand-off in this light: both agree on the need to explain the commonly agreed-upon features of cognition through the framework of *prāmāṇa* epistemology (RAB), but one thinks that that explanation is best given by substantial atomically constituted macro-level objects, the other by sense-data synthesized by the constructive capacity of cognition. Both agree on standards of logic and rationality. But it would not be possible for either to assert the other's statement without also logically abandoning their own previously held criteria; for a direct/critical realist account of the features of experience is not satisfied by the consideration of sense-data construction, and the idealist account is not satisfied by the consideration of independent spatiotemporal continuants.

In fact, most intuitively compelling cases of cultural conflict come under this type of difference in criteria for satisfaction. These examples are classic cases of incommensurability. By this, I do not mean the narrow sense of being resistant to comparison, but something less prone to the mutual incomprehensibility posited by relativism (which is criticized next). I do not even mean, more strictly, the lack of a single theory or procedure within which to choose between two different statements or values, although that is part of the story. Here, incommensurability means that of two statements or values, it can be said that they are incommensurable if the schema that generates one is such that it would not – for reasons of rationality, teleology, cultural aetiology and/or other determining factors – generate the other.[59]

It is in situations like these that the Jaina conditional method seems to be most relevant. But is it a stable position to occupy? Interpreted in this way, the Jaina seems to be saying that the two positions are incommensurable and that because of *X* and *Y*, conflicting schemas can validly be held. The difficulty lies, not in the possibility of different perspectives examined in (i), or even worse, the triviality of incomplete explanation which we discarded as woefully inadequate and misguided; it lies in the

57 Evans-Pritchard 1976, p. 65.

58 Kuhn 1970, pp. 174–210; cf. Meiland 1974, pp. 179–87.

59 Another intuitive way of putting it would be that there is incommensurability 'if concepts expressible in one conceptual scheme are not expressible in the other' (Angle 2002, p. 126). But Angle argues that values often tend only to be incommensurate – that is, not inter-expressible at some specific point in time, as actual historical systems. This is pluralism, and differences are not irreducible. I am here seeking to talk about precisely those values and statements of schema that are irreducible.

fact that *X* requires that *not-p* is not true, and *Y* that *p* is not true. So, the only way *a* can assert consistently that *not-p* is to cease to take *X* as their set of criteria and take up *Y*; the reverse being true of *b* with regard to being able to assert consistently that *p*. But that would simply be a case of changing one's mind. The best way to treat Otherness is to become the Other! No, to be truly potent, the Jaina notion of conditionality requires the valid assertion of *p* **and** *not-p*; that is to say, neither *p* nor *not-p* should need to be given up; this is recognition of true Otherness.

Both *a* and *b* adhere to RAB; so, presumably, their method for the determination of the truth of their assertions must follow the same procedure. If they follow the same narrative of logic, then RAB must be some neutral and common narrative about reality encompassing both *X* and *Y*. But if that standard is neutral and yet commonly held by both *a* and *b*, it cannot be a consistent and unitary (single common) system of validation, for it seems to allow the contradictory *p* and *not-p* to both be held validly. So, one of either *p* or *not-p* must not be true if RAB is to be consistent and rational. Since one of the two is not true, only one of criterial set *X* and *Y*, on the basis of which *a* and *b* assert the two contradictories respectively, must be correct (for only one set can deliver truth). But if that is the case, then we are back simply to the determination of truth within a common theory, attempting to settle whether *X* or *Y* is the proper criterial set, before going on to settle whether *p* or *not-p* is true. In other words, this is an epistemic situation, which is, as was pointed out before considering possible interpretations of *syādvāda*, not a legitimate (i.e. systemic) situation for the conditional method. It is simply a process of determining the truth, for example, within a *pramāṇa* theory in the case of the Naiyāyika or the Buddhist; or in the case of the Asande and the anthropologist, within some standard human process of rational inferential decision taking.[60]

In such a situation, what could possibly constitute acceptance – in any way – of the Other's schema? One good idea is that the exponent of a particular schema makes a genuine attempt to see whether certain problems which they seeks to solve are indeed solved only through the acceptance of the criterial standards of the opposing paradigm.[61] Another idea is actually the converse of this consideration: people subscribing to a paradigm (i.e. a schema) seek to find out whether their own criterial standards irremediably fail to solve a particular problem. Any failure is to be judged by the paradigm's own standards, but if there is such a failure, it is to be **explained** by the rational superiority of the standards of the opposing paradigm, which has not so failed.[62]

The point of the debate is understood by theorists of incommensurability as being about the determination of the explanatory adequacy of one **or** the other schema in relation to a particular challenge or problem. The implication of this observation is twofold:

60 A clear exploration of the collapse of epistemological relativism in the context of a common neutral standard is given in Siegel 1980, pp. 107–17.

61 Doppelt 1978, pp. 39–47.

62 MacIntyre 1991, pp. 117–18.

1. The particular problem, if it is to be solved in relation to competing schemas, must be common to them; if that had not been the case, there would be no point in inquiring whether the opposing schema was even relevant to the problem on hand.
2. If the problem is common but the debate is meant to inquire into the explanatory adequacy of the competing schemas, then only one of the two would fulfil that requirement of adequacy.

It follows from these two points that the schema which fails to fulfil the requirement is wrong with regard to the common problem. If that is the case, then, the formulation is once more reduced to an **epistemic** situation, involving the attempt to determine whether *a* or *b* is correct, by determining whether one of *X* and *Y* lacks the capacity to solve a common particular problem. In consequence, one or the other of *p* and *not-p* is true, and we are no longer talking about the hard case of irreducibly multiple interpretations. Conditionality gets reinterpreted as a provisional suspension of conflict, a sort of holding pattern of the clashing paths, until one or the other competing schema gives up or is ruled out. This hardly offers itself as a proper method, for it simply becomes a dilatory way of overcoming the Other.

If what we have is an epistemic situation, then because one or the other of the two propositions is wrong (in consequence of one or the other of *X* and *Y* being explanatorily inadequate), it would be contradictory to assert that both *p* and *not-p*. The proponent of the Jaina method of conditionality will be thwarted yet again.

The Incoherence of Relativistic Syādvāda

There could be another interpretation, a radical one which eschews all attempts to describe *a*'s and *b*'s positions in terms of a single, unitary rational structure. It holds that the conflicting statements can non-contradictorily hold because they are asserted from schemas of reality that do not overlap.

(iii)
[1] *p* is True under all conditions given in RA for *a*.
[2] *not-p* is True under all conditions given in RB for *b*.

Here is the idea that incommensurability is tantamount to relativism. It is not just that *a* and *b* have different schemas for approaching a common reality; the idea is that somehow, because of how their realities are constituted through their schemas, they occupy different realities (within some common physical time-space to be sure, but cognitively distinct for each). The issue now is whether this relativism implies that the two schemas in question constitute some non-overlapping constructs of reality, RA and RB, different in some non-trivial way.

Conditionality could be read as suggesting relativism as the most completely non-violent relationship with the Other. Since RA and RB are really two different theories for the interpretation of reality, their adherents, *a* and *b* respectively, could treat their lives as free of impingement whatsoever from each other. Their differences would be seen as going down to the very grounds of their rational conception of

truth, such that the formulation in III could be possible: *p* is True and *not-p* is not true under a theory of truth RA, and *not-p* is True and *p* is not true under RB. Since there are different theories involved here, there would be no contradiction between *p* and *not-p* being asserted, for contradiction is internal to a unified theory, and the opposition between *a* and *b* is explained by the use of different theories. Hence both *p* and *not-p* are asserted under the Jaina method, free of contradiction through appeal to different theories in the case of each assertion; each side simply occupies different realms of discourse, and hence of truth-theories (in some way that we need not specify here).

This, however, is incoherent, if there is any connection between truth, meaning and the understanding of propositions. What *a* means by *p* (and hence, through the negation-operator, *not-p*) is based on a theory of what it is truly to assert that *p*, and that theory does not entail (as it should not, in order to remain consistent) the truth of *not-p*. If so, then what *b* means by *p* cannot be the same as what *a* means by *p*, since what *b* means by *p* is based on another theory of what it is truly to assert that *p*, in which it is not true that *p*. If *a* and *b* are both correct in their understanding of the meaning of *p* such that there is no contradiction between them, what *a* means by *p* is not what *b* means by *p*, since it is claimed that *a* truly asserts that *p* and *b* truly asserts that *not-p*. Yet each is supposed to be using correctly (correctly on his theory) the propositional *p*. One can only conclude that they are talking of different things: which means that they either recognize this (in some way independently of their semantics) and see that there is no conflict involved or, as is more likely (since they might not recognize difference) due to their employment of different theories of truth, they simply are not communicating at all. They are not communicating in the sense that the meaning of *p* is not stable between *a*'s use of it and *b*'s use of it. The price of non-contradiction between asserting truly that *p* and truly that *not-p* is mutual incomprehensibility.

However, if there is any sort of communication, it must involve a common (even if tacit) theory of truth. As a common theory of truth is bound to a common rationality, it follows that there must also be commensuration between the claims of the communicating (even if opposed) proponents *a* and *b*. As the now-familiar argument goes, a common rational structure is involved in all epistemological enterprises, as the issue is whether one or another system leads to knowledge through the demonstration of the truth of its views. All epistemology is based on the assumption of commensuration.[63]

The classical Indian tradition is fundamentally non-relativistic in the commensurability of its epistemology, and the Jainas work within that. It is possible to argue that the claims of the Buddhists, the Naiyāyikas, the Mīmāṃsakas and the Vedāntins were indeed commensurate, as they used the *pramāṇa* system to debate who had the best guide to a standard and common (though pragmatic) goal: the ultimate human value of liberation from bondage.[64] Each is concerned to argue that his is the best guide to action, the most satisfactory explanation for the features of experience. We are back to the understanding of the situation as an epistemic one, an

63 Rorty 1980, p. 316.

64 Ram-Prasad 2001.

understanding which precludes the possibility of non-contradictorily asserting both that *p* and that *not-p*. But then, there is no fundamental alterity, and the conditional method once more fails.

It might, however, be argued that the clash between schemas is not an epistemological one aimed at knowing what is the case, but a hermeneutical one aimed at coping with our understanding of what is the case.[65] We could understand the conditionalist as not attempting to argue that it is possible to know both that *p* and that *not-p* because two different realities are involved, but as attempting to say that *p* and *not-p* are held by those who seek to know a common reality. Relativism is discarded as incoherent, in trying to sustain incommensurability by resorting to alternative realities, and the relativistic interpretation of conditionality must be discarded with it. If the conditional method must be rescued from contradiction, it must be done so through some way of interpreting conflicting schemas that preserves are intuition about our inhabitation of a common reality.

This suggestion perhaps brings us closest to a coherent understanding of the Jaina doctrine.

The Doxastic Scenario: The Irrelevance of Contradiction to Conditionality?

The dilemma that has faced interpreters of Jaina conditionality is this: either this is no contradiction, in which case the conflict that comes of true Otherness is absent, leaving only the long haul to an eventual overcoming of the Other; or there is indeed contradiction, in which case the Jaina is condemned to incoherence. Most commentators have been swift to spot the second, but I have argued that the strategy of avoiding contradiction is not ultimately helpful either. The real problem conditionality should tackle is the determination of the proper attitude towards irreducible alterity, and for that, contradictions must be left in place, not overcome.

So, finally, I suggest that the Jaina position must be understood:

1. **not** as a contradictory assertion both that *p* and that *not-p*;
2. but as a descriptive assertion that a state of affairs exists in which both *p* and *not-p* are asserted (by different schemas, i.e. under different parameters of understanding).

This interpretation does not, of course, entail that *p* and *not-p* are not contradictory; for the opponents, *a* and *b*, will continue to argue that only one of *p* or *not-p* is true under RAB, even though acknowledging that it has not yet convincingly been proven which. It is just that the proponent of the Jaina conditional method does not asserts that both *p* and *not-p* are True. They only assert that both *p* and *not-p* are asserted (by their respective proponents) as being True.

The question is: what should we understand the Jaina-inspired conditionalist to be doing when they state that *p* and *not-p* and there is a genuine, irreducible conflict involved? One answer could be that they are merely attempting to describe or catalogue the various views involved in a debate. So they should be understood

65 The distinction is due to Rorty 1980, p. 356.

as saying, ‘abortion is wrong and abortion is acceptable; that is to say, abortion is wrong according to those who stand by the principle that human life is sacred and the foetus is sacred, while abortion is acceptable according to those who think the welfare of the mother justifies abortion before a certain period’. The Jaina-inspired conditionalist is then merely recording the clash of opinions. Their claim that our grasp of reality is multiple is borne out by the different points of view that people have. Their position simply is that there are contradictory positions. They are not saying, ‘I assert that *p and not-p*’; they are actually saying, ‘I assert that *p* is asserted (by someone) and *not-p* is asserted (by someone else)’.

This, of course, means that they themselves are not making an assertion whose content is *p* and *not-p*, after all. Hence, there is no contradiction involved. R.C. Pandeya has noted that there is an incompatibility between conditionality and truth-commitment.[66] This interpretation appears to allow genuine differences of schema because no attempt is made to assimilate *p* and *not-p* into a wider, inclusive and hegemonic explanation. But now a new problem emerges regarding assertion itself, or metaphysical commitment. What is being said about reality (and importantly, our grasp of it)? The description of two schemas is not itself a commitment. As Śaṅkara’s original criticism goes, the seven-fold predication must be (of the form of) a ‘definite assertion’; or else ‘the resulting claim will not have determinate content’, and ‘like doubts, lack all epistemic authority’.[67] For it may legitimately be said that if the Jaina conditionalist is merely describing the clash between points of view, then they are themselves committed to no point of view. Note here that one cannot simply say that they are committed to the view that no point of view is complete, because if they are committed to anything at all, they are committed to the contradiction that both *p* and *not-p* can be known. After all, a Jaina teacher is an authority and must impart knowledge, but how could they, when they make no definite commitment to what the case is?

The Jaina recognizes the need to assert determinately something about the nature of things, and responds by appending to the conditional statement, the word ‘*eva*’, which can be translated as ‘certainly’ or ‘definitely’. This performs the assertive function; its work is to assert or define. But what is achieved by asserting that others assert different things?

One answer is that the Jaina conditional method tries to understand how different schools cope with their own pre-systemic motivations. The conditional statements seek not to establish a singular knowledge of reality but to point out the multiplicity of our attempts to understand that reality.

This interpretation, however, cannot be sustained if the conditional method is meant to articulate an epistemological claim that reality is multiplex and that it can be known in a variety of ways. We may take the Jainas to be asking what conclusions can be drawn from the hermeneutic phenomenon that human beings constantly attempt to connect experience to reality. The conditional method seeks not so much to integrate different schemas into one – for that would simply be a way eventually

66 Pandeya 1996, pp. 318–19: ‘*syāt* neither affirms nor denies truth-value … [If it did] the function of *syāt* would become superfluous’.

67 Śaṅkara 1917, II.2.33, p. 560.

of overcoming Otherness – but to draw some profound conclusion about reality indirectly through a recognition of the multiplicity of incompatible schemas.

To draw on one of Richard Rorty's familiar distinctions, we could interpret the conditional method as leading, not to a systematic claim about reality but to an edifying one,[68] in this case, that human reality is irreducibly multiple. If that is what the *syādvāda* is, then there is no contradiction involved. (For the sake of historical accuracy, we must acknowledge that the classical Jaina tradition is replete with systematic claims, but here we are trying to develop a position derived from Jaina material rather than providing an exegesis of that material.) This interpretation presents the *syādvāda* as a **doxastic** situation, in which the aim is to sensitize everyone to the beliefs of Others.

It might then be possible to argue that *X* and *Y* are standards internal to a particular schema (the realist and the idealist ones in metaphysical explanation, or the conservative and the liberal ones in the case of abortion). Then, though there may be debate or clashes between *a* and *b* within a common rational theory (RAB), the standards considered adequate for holding *p* (i.e. with criterial set *X*) or *not-p* (i.e. with criterial set *Y*) may be compelling in themselves, rather than because they are assessed against RAB. *Y* would not be rationally compelling in the sense of being correct within or cohering more with RAB. Instead, it would be compelling because it explained more than could *X* of what *b* was seeking in RAB. Within RAB, both the Yogācāra Buddhist and the Naiyāyika accept that liberation is from suffering. But the Yogācārin affirms that *p*: the world is constituted by impermanent phenomenal sense-data. This is because they subscribe to the requirement that their statements satisfy *X*: as the Buddha taught, liberation follows from understanding that suffering is caused by desire for a self and a world whose stability and permanence are only apparent. But the Naiyāyika follows condition *Y*: liberation is an actual detachment of a permanent self from a real world. In that case, they have to state that *not-p*: the world is not constituted by sense-data (rather, it is constituted by stable, macro-level, cognition-independent objects). In this situation, the conditionalist could come along and say that *a* and *b* cannot reduce the basis of their respective assertions to a straightforward determination of the truth of one of the statements on the basis of RAB. *X* is compelling for the truth of *p* and *Y* for the truth of *not-p*. Hence, the Jaina could hold (3) and (4) of the conditional method without fear of contradiction, since *X* and *Y* are genuinely incommensurable. This position is largely in agreement with Jonardon Ganeri's defence of the Jaina conditional.[69]

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68 Rorty 1980, p. 365: Rorty grandly takes edifying philosophy to be an attempt to stop philosophy from 'degenerating' into 'mere inquiry' or an 'exchange of views'. Of course, in the classical Indian context, philosophy was always (at least formally) about attaining an ultimate end and never 'mere' inquiry.

69 'The so-called "integration" of two points of view ... does not mean the creation of some new standpoint, which is the combination of the first two. For this would lead to the formation of inconsistent standpoints unless implausible constraints were placed on what can constitute a standpoint. Instead, what it means is that, if *p* is assertible from some standpoint σ_1, then this fact, that *p* is assertible from σ_1, can itself be asserted from σ_2 and every other standpoint. In this way, each disputant can recognise the element of truth in the other standpoints, by making explicit the presuppositions or conditions under which any

If this construal of *syādvāda* is plausible, it suggests that the issue of contradiction between *p* and *not-p* is beside the point. The Jainas see no assertoric role for the statements in their method. They merely entertain them simultaneously, and they do so only because the simultaneity accurately captures the fact that *p* and *not-p* are asserted at the same time, one each by the opposing schools. By bringing attention to bear on the contradiction between the two schemas, the Jainas must be seen as arrestingly drawing our attention to the adversarial tension between *a* and *b*.

This is a precarious position to adopt, and its exegetical basis is admittedly weak, given the eagerness of many classical Jaina writers to undercut their recognition of multiplicity with a dogmatic assertion of the truth of their own doctrinal commitments. But I submit that nothing that is said here need be contradictory for a Jaina approach to conflict. Upon reading what Mahāvīra says in his answers to the *avyakta* questions in the *Bhagavatīsūtra*, one is not sure whether his teaching of the different answers given from different schemas is meant to be part of a picture of reality or a picture of our understanding of it. On the one hand, his assertions are metaphysical, and therefore seem to imply that he is giving a theory of reality: the world is eternal, and so on. But if that were so, then when he asserts too that the world is non-eternal, we would be forced to accept that he is being contradictory after all. On the other hand, why does he stress the role that points of view play in describing obviously contradictory descriptions? He must be indicating the multiplicity of points of view, and the nature of reality that allows such multiplicity.

This is not, then, a Jaina metaphysics; it is, as my usage has suggested, a Jaina method alone;[70] one which, if it establishes anything at all, establishes the end of 'merely' epistemological inquiry. For what purpose is a question we will soon explore.

This 'both/and' reasoning is subtle, and thus can easily be misunderstood; but it is also unstable. It is unclear whether the classical Jainas themselves always understood that they stood poised on the brink of simple contradiction, that any move to epistemologize their doctrine would be fatal. But when they did not so epistemologize, they ran the danger of being ignored by the very schools they were concerned to reconcile through assertoric description. Perhaps the other schools recognized the Jainas' self-imposed task of manifold understanding, but concluded that their own search for knowledge was the best guide for the pursuit of the ultimate value of liberation, a search for which the non-epistemological Jaina doctrine was

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given assertion is made' (Ganeri 2002, p. 279). Ganeri strives to provide an axiomatic basis to his own construal of a seven-valued logic for the Jaina use of conditionality, although it is not always clear how that logic is necessary for what is intuitively a metaphysical issue. In relation to my reading, there is no integration involved (although Ganeri indicates that he may himself be using it in a particular way, with scare quotes around 'integration'), for it is then hard to see how this does not result in precisely the holding together of contradictory viewpoints which is the original problem. But the substance of his suggestion concerns edification – the recognition and affirmation of the truth of others' views. Of course, the question still remains: truth for whom? The nature of multiple, incompatible truths is explored in the following pages.

70 Balcerowics rightly remarks that the instrument of *syādvāda* is 'subordinate to the theory of the multiplexity of reality'; Balcerowics 2002, pp. 44–5.

irrelevant. If that was what happened, it must point to a profound incommensurability indeed between the Jainas and the other schools.

Summing up, the conditional method can be read in the following way, as the first principle of a Jaina-inspired multiplist metaphysics: itself not metaphysical, but crucially a method which allows one to approach that metaphysics. Conditionality (*syādvāda*), then, amounts to this:

> [P1] *a* asserts that *p* in RAB conditional on schema S*a*, and *b* asserts that *not-p* in RAB conditional on schema S*b*

This is how the following classical statement of the principle should be understood:

> From a particular point of view, you (Mahāvīra) acknowledge, 'it is', and from another point of view you acknowledge, 'it is not'. So too, 'both it is and it is not' as well as 'it is inexpressible'. All these are asserted with reference to the doctrine of standpoints only, not unconditionally.[71]

The Other Two Principles of Multiplism: Circumspection and Heterology

We now move on to look at the other principles that the method of conditionality allows. This will show the ultimate purpose that is served by this method.

All claims to knowledge – all claims that assert the coherence of a schema – are conditional statements, according to [P1]. A statement is non-conditional only when made within its schematic constraints. This indicates something profound about the nature of multiplicity, brought out in a Jaina doctrine I interpret as the principle of how to take Otherness (heterology, literally, the 'doctrine of non-oneness' (*anekāntavāda*)). The constraints that are imposed by this multiplicity are summed up in a third principle, that of circumspection (*nayavāda*).

Jaina multiplism takes the form of the claim that no single schema can present a total or determinate description of reality. The multiplexity of reality is thought to be beyond any single systematic description. An example of this doctrine is the Jaina enunciation of both substantialist and anti-substantialist ontological arguments. The developed Jaina position as given by the philosopher Siddhasena, involves a description of reality as both having an essence (literally, 'own-nature' (*svabhāva*)) and being eternally in flux-ridden modification. He argues that it is not possible to make a commitment to only one of these models. There is a defensible ontology of being in which elements are interpreted as substances, possessing essence. But, equally, there is ontology of becoming, in which elements are perpetually modified.[72] Since both can be defended, neither can be discarded. In that case, it would be inconsistent with the spirit of Jainism to discard one,[73] because Jainism seeks to understand reality as it is. Various Jainas spend a good deal of time and energy arguing for the tenability of both ontological theories. Their strategy is to show that each is coherent and defensible, although they are incompatible; and from

71 Samantabhadra 1914, v. 14.

72 Siddhasena 1924, I.11–12.

73 Ibid., III.8–9.

this to draw the conclusion that reality is such as to be capable of being grasped in different, incompatible ways. (Again, it should be acknowledged that they often spoil the effect of their careful multiplism by rhetorical conclusions asserting the superiority of the Jaina way. Yet it is difficult to see whether this is only a rhetorical device for making others see the point of being Jaina, or a genuine mistake about how to make use of their own strategy.)

Three options can be urged on this principle; but our reconstruction of conditionality showed that these are not sustainable. We could offer the sceptical alternative that the existence of such incompatible views is a sign of our inability to grasp reality at all. Secondly, we could give the relativistic alternative that we simply construct different schemes, which have no bearing on each other. Finally, we could stand by an absolutist realism and say that the Jaina simply has not searched hard enough to find suitably sophisticated tests with which to settle the dispute between the ontologies. But there is no scepticism involved, since many types of available knowledge are embraced; relativism is incoherent; and the relevant schematic cases for an acceptance of multiplism are precisely those that escape even exhaustive analysis. No single schema can present a total or determinate description of reality.

This cannot be a simple case of partial truthhoods hegemonically united by a further schema. Different truths – the truths of Others – simply co-exist within a common reality, and they do so because of something essential to their natures.

> Statements are valid in their respective schemes, but they fail if they attempt to refute each other. One who knows the 'non-onesidedness' of reality never asserts the unqualified invalidity of a particular statement.[74]

The following principle may be extracted from the heterological doctrine of non-onesidedness (we might say, doctrine of 'Others-ness'):

> [P2] RAB for *a* is a scheme S*a* in which it is asserted that *p*; RAB for *b* is a scheme S*b* in which it is asserted that *not-p*. Then, *a* under S*a* cannot assert that *p* under S*b*, and *b* under S*b* cannot assert that *not-p* under S*a*.

It should be emphasized that this does not hold of any old claim. Nothing in [P2] requires that any and every schema should be should be accepted without inquiry.[75] We are here concerned only with those views that, in some way we cannot determine here, are not amenable to rational invalidation.

In a classical Indian context, heterology says: for example, an Advaitin cannot, from within their conception of a unified consciousness, rule out the possibility that reality is constituted by such momentariness as the Buddha is said to have experienced. A schema is not a partial grasp of reality in the straightforward sense that it cannot, with its own resources, provide a determinate representation of reality;

74 Siddhasena 1924, I.28.

75 For a precise examination of the actual, historically conditioned categories that the Jainas consider as multiple viewpoints, see Balcerowics 2002, pp. 48–60. He points out that although the Jainas themselves specify only a certain number of views, they admit the theoretical possibility of an infinite number.

it is partial in the negative sense that it cannot, with its own resources, determine that there are no other understandings of reality.

Can we appeal to any further encompassing reason to try and determine which of S*a* and S*b* is 'ultimately' correct? A proper heterology cannot countenance this. The question of which of them is correct and the other wrong is 'unanswerable'. This is what Mahāvīra does (in the recording of his words in the *Bhagavatīsūtras*) in answer to such questions as: 'What is the nature of the world? What is the nature of the soul?' He simply but systematically gives the position under one point of view and then that under its opposing one. There seems, from his method, no further way of reducing the number of available answers. Reality is multiple: the ultimate state is one in which different, incompatible truths co-occur.

The innovative 20th-century philosopher K.C. Bhattacharya gets admirably to the heart of the matter. He points out that *anekāntavāda* 'not only asserts a plurality of determinate truths but also takes each truth to be an indetermination of alternative truths'.[76]

Now, one may ask: if one came out of S*a*, one would give a certain answer and if one came out of S*b*, one would give another answer. But is there some way of deciding which of them should one actually hold? The answer that emerges from the silence is: there is no such way. So, why do people hold one schema rather than another? For no reason as such. That is to say, for no further justifiable reason. They hold their view on non-rational grounds. I think we may reasonably extract another principle, this time derived from the doctrine of circumspection (*nayavāda*).[77] This principle centres on the idea that it is not determinately answerable (i.e. it is not answerable from any final rational viewpoint) as to which is the correct schema to hold:

> [P3] RAB is such that S*a* and S*b*; and there is no further ground for why S*a* or S*b*; they are held on non-rational grounds (i.e. no grounds based on RAB).

It must be made clear that there is more than a spurious difference between schemas; there is real conflict. But this is not all there is to it. They are not only in conflict but also are circumscribed; circumspection is the consequence of the conditionality of multiple schemas. The doctrine of circumspection brings out the epistemic modesty that the Jaina thinks is entailed by the manifoldness of reality. According to the 9th-century Jaina, Prabhācandra:

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76 Bhattacharya 1996, p. 58; my emphasis. For reasons I shall explore soon, I would prefer to think of this as referring to multiplism rather than pluralism.

77 The word *naya*, which I translate as '(circumscribed) schema', is held to be derived from the word *nayati*, which the medieval Jaina philosospher Malliṣeṇa glosses as 'leading, making one to reach, lifting to the point of consciousness' (Thomas 1960, p. 154). A *naya* is a 'lead', a way of approaching an infinitely multiple reality. Thomas quotes a famous saying, 'As many as are the ways of expression, just so many are there schema' (ibid.). (I have modified Thomas's translation in both instances.)

See Akalaṅka 1959, X.1; the schemas are the original intentions, the unexamined starting point of those who hold them (as we will remember, this is pre-judice, in the hermeneutical sense of the term).

> A circumscribed viewpoint is an epistemic agent's postulation, which is non-refuting (i.e. which cannot repudiate or rule out a conflicting view), and [which therefore] expresses [only] one version of an entity.[78]

Modest though this claim is, it is not anodyne. A simple and unproblematic move would be to go from saying that reality is manifold to saying that, consequently, many different theories have to go into describing it. That is to say, an entity can be a work of art, daubs of paint, a rectangular canvas with markings, and so on. More generally, to describe, say, an object like a human being, would be to deploy such 'viewpoints' as biology, physics, chemistry, sociology, anthropology, and so on, each of which would be circumscribed by its conceptual resources.

If this is the Jaina point, it is anodyne to the point of being trivial. But, of course, this is not so. It simply cannot be so easy to say that there is a way of synthesizing, for example, three classical Indian points of view. These are not views that are assimilable into one another. They are views that are in conflict over a single, common issue. There is agreement over the question and therefore conflict over the answer. The irreducible nature of this conflict is clearly something the Jainas accept; that, indeed, is their problem: 'philosophers contradict each other, none of them is trustworthy'.[79]

The key phrase in the definition of circumspection given above is that a schema cannot rule out another. The schema relevant to our discussion is not one that simply lacks the resources to comment on the claims of others; rather, it is one which is both in meaningful opposition to others and yet cannot rule them out. The significant multiplist move is from a recognition of Otherness to an acceptance of the nature of our schema with regard to the Other: all schemas are circumscribed in this crucial way, and ultimately not amenable to further rational foundation.

It is important at this point to see in what sense the grounding of the choice between schemas is supposed to be inexpressible in rational terms. Both schemas are assertible, but not because neither is a matter of plain truth, for both are. In other words, the Jaina-inspired multiplist does not think that a final resolution is possible merely because the choice is only to do with appropriateness rather than truth. The multiplist maintains that there is no resolution because the choice between even ultimately truth-giving schemas is not a rational one.

Multiplism vs Syncreticism and Pluralism

Multiplism, as I have presented it through the three principles, seeks to preserve the core of the Jaina intuition that the challenge lies in the incompatibility – and not just the diversity – of truths. The appropriate reading of the principles is not, therefore, some meta-acceptance of different truth-claims within one's superschema; for that would merely be syncreticism. Syncreticism is just an attempt to hold incompatible claims together: it results in a 'conjunction that is just a mess', as Nicholas Rescher acidly

78 Prabhācandra 1941, p. 676.

79 Samantabhadra 1914, v. 3.

observes.[80] Multiplism is not syncreticism because the latter takes the conflictual nature of schemas seriously. Syncreticism weakens Otherness, by maintaining that a suitably complex schemas can bring different – and only apparently conflicting – truth claims together. The result is actually a hegemonization of other schemas, as they are forced into a position within one's own.[81] As so often, K.C. Bhattacharya is astute on this issue: 'an ultimate plurality of truths', he points out, should not be taken as 'one truth' consisting of all of them. He calls the logical collection of different (claims to) truth a 'bare togetherness',[82] a metaphysical co-existence of incompatible truths. This is not a schematic unity of different truths.

It should be reiterated that multiplism is different from pluralism. Now, a fruitful and sophisticated pluralism may well be non-relativistic, in engaging in negotiations guided by the common form of life of the society to which it belongs.[83] It would also distinguish between right and wrong actions in different moral traditions.[84] In both these ways, multiplism would resemble pluralism. But I would claim that multiplism suggests, in a way pluralism does not, a metaphysics that accounts for why we co-exist in this state of irreducible yet engaged alterity. It goes beyond pluralism, which only looks instrumentally at how to realize one's own ends when confronted with Others. Multiplism says why we should engage with Others. First, we co-exist in Otherness because reality is multiplex (and how that could logically be asserted was the burden of the Jaina argument for conditionality). Second, we do engage with Others because our realizations are all of that same multiplexity. Finally, we should do so non-violently because the multiplexity of reality makes it wrong to metaphysically and ethically overcome or exclude Others.

The Multiplist Life: Affinity and Heteronomy

The Significance of Circumspection and Heterology

Here is how a multiplist philosopher looks at the teachings and behaviour of Mahāvīra and the Tīrthaṅkaras (the spiritually liberated exemplars of the tradition): they patiently themselves take up and explicate first one schema and then the other. That is, in their thoughts and deeds, they demonstrate the presence of difference(s). They attempt to bring, within themselves, an understanding of the Other. They accept the experience of difference but also seek to experience an inclusion of differences. They act thus because they wish to do more that just acknowledge, celebrate or otherwise reify alterity in the way a pluralist would. They wish to demonstrate that these alternative schemas, while genuine alternatives, are alternatives of the same

80 Rescher 1993, p. 95.

81 An unawareness of this fatal problem marks even some well-known interpretations of Jaina philosophy: Shuklaji Sanghvi understands the Jainas to be saying that 'all cognitions are, after all, valid (*vāstavika*)' (Sanghvi 1996, p. 39). Another example talks of 'synthesis' 'which reconciles vexed questions' (Jain 1996, p. 269).

82 Bhattacharya 1996, pp. 58–60.

83 Baghramian, 2004, p. 298.

84 Ibid., pp. 314–16.

reality. I would venture to suggest that they search for affinity between alternatives (the constituents of alterity, as it were).

The components of this approach are two: *nayavāda* or the doctrine of circumscribed schemas, and *anekāntavāda* or the doctrine of non-onesidedness. These have been stated as [P2] and [P3]. Together, they imply that we are all within our own schema, even while we seek to understand the existence and nature of the schema of Others. This sober realization of the non-transcendentality of schemas, in the face of alterity, is matched by an acute recognition of prior location within a schema. Why one happens to be located in a schema – culture or a religion or a way of life that is more specific or limited – is not a matter that can be justified independently of the concerns of the schema itself. Any appeal to why you are where you are will merely advert to considerations available precisely and only because you are where you are. Your experience of the Other's location, likewise, will be that the Other appeals to the Other's own schema and nothing beyond it. But the Jaina-inspired point, uniquely, is that this fact should be and is available to both you and the Other. In other words, we can transcendentally equally be aware of the non-transcendental nature of our and the Other's grounding in our and the Other's own schemas respectively; be aware that we share a reality, albeit at different locations.

It is frequently pointed out in the Jaina literature that a circumscribed schema is not refutable unless it makes the (incoherent) transcendental move of claiming complete and singular veracity.[85] By asserting the impossibility of refutation (widely construed), the doctrine implies that it is no use attempting to assert oneself over and against the Other in any move towards, shall we say, a radical orthodoxy of schemas. (Let us think of this model as competitive pluralism.) Equally, this doctrine makes something active out of the consideration of schematic non-transcendence. We should not take this to be a licence to simply acknowledge the alterity of the Other (as in simple pluralism), and be content with passive non-violence. The Jaina-derived view holds that it should actually lead us to recognize how allotropically – both differently and affinitively – situated we and the Other are: that is to say, what condition of non-transcendence we share in our schemas.

We should seek active non-violence in engagement.[86] The moral impulse to engagement comes from an understanding of the nature of one's own and the Other's schema. The Other can neither be avoided, for it is present in experience, nor strategically overcome, for there are no self-sustaining resources for doing so. Further, once the presence of the Other is acknowledged, the question arises of how it is to be engaged with. All this amounts to saying that the Other must be understood. Understanding involves an elucidation of the nature of the Other, such that an imaginative location in the non-transcendental condition of the Other can be attained. In short, there can be affinity. To understand is to make sense of the Other's

85 Padmarajiah 1986, pp. 311–12 has a brief survey of the relevant material.

86 The Jainas conventionally claim that all schema are subject to seven types of circumspection under which they can be analysed. Even to attempt a translation of them is an interpretive issue, and in any case, their embeddeness in the philosophical tradition perhaps makes them too specific for our quite cross-culturally general theoretical purposes; see Padmarajiah, op. cit., Ch. X for a useful survey.

integrity; it is, further, to reconcile that with one's own integrity; finally, it is also a coming to terms with the simultaneous co-existence of one's own and the Other's schema and the absence of any transcendental priority (of one over the Other or of some further universal). I wish to use the word 'heterology', which has become somewhat common in Anglophone writing in recent years, to describe the pursuit of this understanding of the content of the Other's schema and the affinity between different – and alternative – schemas. The study of difference here is a study for the sake of affinity; and heterology as study within, and of, circumscribed schemas of life is therefore neither the overcoming nor the simple acknowledgement of alterity.

It should be pointed out that this interpretation differs, in its conception of what it is to meet the Other, from those enunciations of heterology that either do not go far enough or go too far for a multiplist reading. On the one hand, this Jaina-derived heterology goes further than one that gives significance to studying the Other, primarily because it allows me to define myself. Heterology for self-clarification may well be radical and admirable (especially when it challenges exclusivisms through its project of defining oneself in terms of the Other). But the Other is then simply – and negatively – important only because of its impact on the boundaries and spaces of oneself or one's schema of life.[87] Jaina-derived heterology wishes the project, by contrast, to be more positively a recognition of the place of the Other. On the other hand, Jaina-derived heterology also gives significance equally to oneself and the Other, and so is different from another contrasting heterology that transposes significance, that is, gives oneself significance only through being at the mercy of the Other. Such a heterological ethic subsumes the sense of self within an extravagant assertion of Otherness; one may say that the Other is only fit, paradoxically, to conquer me.[88]

Multiplism takes the engagement with the Other as the ethical given; its metaphysics directly motivates this recognition, driving a coming to terms or coming into consonance with reality. Heterology is therefore not teleologically directed either at the Other or at the self, but at a reality that is both Other and self.[89] Finally,

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87 This heterology, of course, is the 'original' conception of Michel de Certeau. I am merely drawing sharper, perhaps critical, attention to this feature of his work that others have recognized, although with much more approbation. 'For de Certeau, the most important role in the constitution of [the] logic [of discourse] is reserved for the complex ... play of the other with the more overt representational part of the discourse, hence his designation of his project as heterologies. This other, which forces discourses to take the meandering appearance that they have, is ... *the discourse's mode of relation to its own historicity* in the moment of its utterance' (Godsich 1986, p. xx; my emphasis).

88 This is a reading of Emmanuel Levinas, who motivates his ethical engagement through requiring the Other, which has both 'poverty' and 'mastery', to 'order' and 'ordain' him (Levinas 1985, pp. 89, 97). 'The Other must hold me 'hostage' in order to 'deliver' me (Levinas 1981, p. 117).

89 This metaphysics distinguishes my position from Buchanan's ingenious reading of de Certeau's heterology as one where the tension between infinite Otherness and utter sameness ('the impossibility of an other than is not infinitely other') is treated through reading it as a process: the other is still becoming the infinitely other, so some part of it will still be within grasp and some parts already outside of that grasp (Buchanan 2000, pp. 75–6).

for multiplism, the Other is not transcendent(al) but fundamentally co-eval in its existence with oneself; it is different but not alien.[90]

Not being Violent towards the Other: The Problems of Toleration

We have now considered extensively what a Jaina-based metaphysics and ethics of Otherness might look like. I suggested at the start of that consideration that such a metaphysics and ethics will address Otherness non-violently. It is time now to look more closely at the appropriate non-violent attitude that multiplism might elicit. The conventional candidate for a non-violent attitude is toleration; and it should be taken seriously since many modern philosophers of Jainism have also suggested that Jaina philosophy and religion result in toleration. Let us see whether toleration is the best way of interpreting the attitudinal manifestation of multiplism's non-violent approach to the Other.

Toleration is an attitude practised in the context of intellectual conflict. I will not talk here of toleration towards actions done in consequence of holding a certain viewpoint; I will limit myself to the core issue of toleration towards the very holding of those views. So, the issue is not of a secular liberal tolerating Bible classes in state-funded schools, but tolerating the religious tenets of Christianity. Of course, in most cases this would be toleration towards the expression (in writing or speech) of this idea. There must therefore be the further qualification that the issue is only about the content of such expression rather than the form or manner of it (surrounded by text calling for violent confrontation, or screamed on the streets, and so on).

As will have become familiar in this discussion, conflict is minimally this: two schemas are in conflict when, for some *p*, *p* is a statement asserted in one schema and *not-p* in another schema. The use of negation and contradiction remain constant between the two, as does the content of the statement that *p*. More generally, this constancy may be taken to extend to the rational processes by which adherents of the conflicting schemas arrive at their conclusions (this way, we set aside radical relativisms). In any case, it is clear that toleration is an attitude which requires there to be some sort of conflict and if radical relativism is really possible, there would be no conflict and therefore, no real need for intellectual toleration (pragmatic

In terms of ethical engagement, it is possible that multiplist strategies will resemble those of de Certeau read thus; but the metaphysical positions and the motivation they provide will be very different.

90 Once more, the contrast is with de Certeau and Levinas. For both of them, heterological engagement is motivated by the Otherness of God, a concept with no grip in Jainism. On de Certeau, (*contra* much cultural theory on the subject) I am in agreement (odd though it may seem to students of radical orthodoxy) with Graham Ward (Ward 1996). De Certeau's heterology is theology (and vice versa: 'theology is *par excellence* a heterological project'; Ward 1996, p. 526), since the supreme Other is God and the forgotten Other is the socially unequal. The latter is the 'second other', engagement with whom is consequent or dependent on the former. And, beyond doubt, Levinas's ethical 'desire' is for a truth that he considers totally alien to him; and likewise, he runs the otherness of God into the otherness of humans.

challenges to co-existence and epistemic or semantic challenges to communication, perhaps, but not toleration).

Now, two interrelated questions are: what is toleration? and, why should we be tolerant? The former question usually receives very little attention, and is generally taken to be something like ‘permitting’, ‘allowing without hindrance’, and so on. It is not a profoundly philosophical question, given the nature of the answers to the second question. Taking the idea of toleration in this minimal sense as permitting someone to have a conflicting view, the usual move is to try to answer the second question.

Of the three broad, commonly accepted answers to the question of why we should practice toleration, two may be said to be objectivist and one subjectivist. Objectivist answers are based on the notion that the assertions of conflicting viewpoints are matters of fact and truth, while the subjectivist answer is based on the notion that these assertions are determined by such intrinsic considerations as appropriateness or the sentiment of approbation.

Each answer has a certain conception of toleration as a value (again, ‘why should we be tolerant?’). Let us use an intuitive distinction about values: a value is instrumental and provisional if it is adhered to for the sake of its effectiveness in pursuing ends, the attainment of which would render this value redundant. On the other hand, a value is basic or ultimate if it is adhered to because so adhering to it is itself an end and not a means to an end.

One objectivist argument for toleration is merely a pragmatic recognition of the nature of belief and the acquisition of views: people cannot will themselves or be forced to believe views (especially to do with religion), and so it is of no use trying to coerce them to give up their present view and adopt ours. Therefore, if our objective is truly to change the views of those whom we consider mistaken (as opposed to killing them or merely forcing them to conform outwardly to our norms), it would be pointless to be intolerant of their views. We simply must put up with their views until we can persuade them through reasoning to come to accept our views.

The other famous objectivist argument is the instrumental one that we cannot be sure that our views have been established beyond doubt, and that there is no chance of another view being correct. Moreover, even if this were possible, the coexistence of different views may simply encourage rational debate, with the hope that ever more coherent views will emerge.

These objectivist arguments use toleration purely as means, not as a value in itself. In the former case, toleration is merely a negative conception of the limits of our ability to deal with a conflicting schemas. In the latter, it is a strategy for securing some final correct schema, attainment of which would render toleration redundant. In both accounts, the acceptance of incompatible schema is strictly provisional, a reluctant acknowledgement of their role. They do not treat toleration as a virtue of intrinsic worth. Since multiplism certainly rejects the possibility of there being only one correct schema, objectivist toleration is of little relevance to it.

A more generous attitude towards incompatible schema – and therefore of potentially greater interest to a multiplist view of reality – is found in the subjectivist conception of toleration. Since subjectivism about any particular area involves the idea that there is no determinate fact of the matter that renders certain views right and

others wrong, conflict is not always seen as between truth and falsehood. Incompatible schemas might simply be the result of different 'sentiments' or appropriate subjective states. In that case, all we can say is that our schema (and maybe it alone) is apt for us rather than that it (alone) is true. A conflicting schema may be inapt for us (and we may even consider it inapt for the person holding it) but we are not driven to thinking that the fact of the matter makes that schema mistaken (i.e. when it is incompatible with our own correct one). We may be irritated by someone holding a view which we do not subscribe to, but there is no ground for thinking that our holding a particular view coherently requires us to hold that an incompatible view is wrong (i.e. in the face of an objective reality) and therefore that the one who holds it should be corrected. It is possible to tolerate views we do not hold when our holding a particular view does not commit us on pain of inconsistency to the erroneousness of those other views. Toleration is a basic value because it exemplifies a proper approach to differences, given that the differences do not involve truth (and therefore the need to avoid contradiction); toleration is that attitude which recognizes that the constitution of people's subjectivity simply results in different schemas.

The worry about this subjectivist conception is that it gains this richer sense of toleration only by weakening the sense of conflict. The conflict between schemas is one of what we find appropriate, and it is reasonably clear that different people might find different schemas appropriate or natural to them. Under this conception, the inability to assert something from within a schema which differs from mine is only due to my psychological make-up, or some such subjective feature; it is not because of the threat of contradiction. Since the reality of contradiction is a necessary feature of multiplism, as seen in the principle of conditionality, softening the grounds of difference is not helpful. Subjectivist toleration, then, does not seem to fit the metaphysical commitments of multiplism; therefore, it cannot be the relevant attitude for a multiplist to have towards Otherness.

Objectivist approaches to toleration do not treat it as an ultimate value reflecting the nature of reality, while subjectivist approaches do treat it as a value reflecting the truth-independent nature of schemas, but only because they undervalue the fundamental nature of alterity.

Furthermore, there is the fundamental question of whether toleration is in any case a sustainable value, regardless of its fit with multiplist heterology. Objectivist toleration, as we have just seen, makes sense only in the context of a monotonal conception of schematic truth: we must be committed to the truth of our schema and the error of others, but still seek to allow these erroneous others to exist. But what is the virtue in allowing what we do not endorse (because we hold them wrong)?[91] The only answer can be that it is the most effective and virtuous – because peaceful – strategy in dealing with Others who one considers wrong. It becomes clear that objectivist toleration is most naturally related to liberalism, which we saw at the very beginning as one, albeit gentle, way of overcoming the Other.[92] Toleration (in the form that I have called objectivist) most naturally offers the best attitude for

91 Mendus 1989, pp. 18–19.

92 Toleration is a practice within 'substantive liberalism', centred on living 'autonomously' (Oberdiek 2001, p. 111).

the liberal;[93] and as such appears to be inappropriate for multiplism. Subjectivist toleration appears more naturally to fit with pluralism, psychologically encoding its acceptance of monadic differences of schema with a relaxed acceptance that carries with it a suggestion of disengagement.

What is now required is an attitude consistent with the non-hegemonistic acknowledgement of Otherness that non-violently seeks to locate schemas other than one's own within a common but multiplex reality, thereby acknowledging the need to engage ethically and psychologically with those who possess those schemas.

Beyond Toleration: Affinity through Empathy

Taking the principles of multiplism – [P1]–[P3] enunciated earlier – as both requirements and constraints on the ethics of engagement, toleration does not seem adequate or appropriate as the attitude one should take towards the Other. While modern Indian philosophy has tended to think that toleration is indeed implied by Jaina metaphysics,[94] I think that the multiplism developed in these pages points to something more psychologically demanding. While I have argued that my interpretation of Jaina principles as multiplism is compatible with Jainism as such, I must acknowledge that it is difficult to see how Jainism as a distinct religious tradition – rather than a self-transcending practice – can survive if taken to the logical conclusion to which I point now.

Intellectual toleration is incoherent. Consider: what is it to tolerate someone's views? It is to live with something with which you disagree (with which your views are in conflict). But that is only to say that you take your conclusion to be correct and the other person's to be wrong. That is why there is conflict, after all. So, whatever you actually do in terms of putting up with the view with which you disagree, you do not actually accept the possibility of that view being correct. (If you did, then you would not really be in disagreement.) Since it would be inconsistent for you to assert the correctness of your view and at the same time allow for the correctness of another (i.e. conflicting) view, you could not make any commitment to its being correct in any circumstances. (You could make a commitment to someone having the right to hold it, even if you hold it to be incorrect, but that is not the same thing).

There seems to be no such thing as intellectual toleration of another schema, because having one schema precisely is to reject an opposing one. Practical toleration is only towards the person who holds a view opposed to your own (well-developed and coherent) one, not towards the view itself; you have to be committed to its being wrong. To repeat, that is why you 'put up' with it, not agree with or embrace it.

But multiplist ethics does appear to require some extraordinary acceptance of the existential legitimacy of diverse schemas, not just a recognition of the dignity of

93 Objectivist toleration is anchored is such impeccable liberal qualities as 'respect for persons and truth' (Conway 1997, p. 165); and is a sound strategy for the liberal pursuit of an ultimately hegemonistic consensus.

94 Matilal 1981, p. 61; in his pioneering analysis, Matilal is not primarily concerned with delineating the nature of Jaina toleration, merely suggesting that this is what characterizes the philosophy of Jainism.

those who hold them. On any reading of the Jaina principles, it is not only legitimate for people to hold different views, it is legitimate for there to be such different views. This, of course, is because reality is multiplex. Now, how might all this translate into practice?

What is required is a way of both (i) adhering to non-contradictory views of our own, and (ii) making sense of and responding to the fact of irreducible intellectual conflict. Acknowledgement of the non-rational ground of schemas (i.e. [P3]) might not alter the psychological fact that we do adhere to one, howsoever nuanced it is.

If, then, adherence to a schema is a non-rational matter, to recognize that it is non-rational may alter my former conviction that it was rational (if I continue to be rational about it, as it were), but since it precisely is a non-rational matter, the rational recognition of its non-rational basis could well have no bearing on my actually adhering to that schema. So, I might well recognize that my being a certain sort of Hindu rather than a Buddhist was a matter of my being born into a certain family, or being educated in a certain way, or my inclination or disposition towards certain teachings and practices rather than others. But precisely for that reason, I find myself carrying on being the sort of Hindu I am. In that situation, a truly non-violent way of engaging with the Buddhist Other would be to entertain the possibility that I could have been a Buddhist and rationally asserted Buddhist beliefs, yet accept that the reason I do not do so is on no extrinsic rational grounds. If I had been otherwise, I would legitimately have been a Buddhist, but I am not. If I had been one, then I would have asserted Buddhist beliefs and I would not have been wrong to have done so. But granted my given existential state, I cannot escape asserting, say, belief in the salvific grace of Viṣṇu. I can nevertheless see how I could have been a Buddhist, and I would have a truth-claiming conception of the religious life in either case.

The difficulty in having this attitude lies, of course, in taking one's schema as well as the Other's as both being matters of plain truth – and yet adhering to one and leaving a genuinely accepting but non-hegemonistic space for the Other.

What, then, are the consequences of a multiplist practice of non-violence? Intellectual openness to alterity has to flow from a metaphysical commitment to a single yet multiplex reality. This commitment requires the content of the multiplist schema to contain acknowledgement of the truth of other schemas. The attitude to the Other is not cultivated as merely a sensible response to the simultaneous need for both coherence and the non-violent treatment of intellectual conflict. Rather, it flows from the metaphysical commitment to an integrated reality of many differing and different truths. The Jaina nature of this commitment can be seen in the fact that Mahāvīra himself deliberately argued, conditionally, for differing and different truths.

For this reason, Jaina-inspired multiplism can vanish behind the assertion of the legitimacy of heterological schema. Transcendentally, commitment to any one schema is obliterated. There is only an acknowledgement of the overarching value of entertaining (in Others) a multiplicity of truthful views.

This is a state of genuine empathy. It is to draw out a more detailed psychological picture of this state of mind from the Jaina ethical literature, which latter is mainly

concerned with outward ritual conduct and sometimes mysterious soteriological claims. But the multiplist has a powerful motivation for this difficult requirement: to practice a form of intellectual non-violence, which is to be in that mental state that best expresses a proper orientation towards reality. As the early Jaina commentator, Kundakunda puts it, to take attitudes of aversion to particular views is to commit acts of intellectual violence towards them.[95] (Of course, we are talking of certain relevant views; the Jaina is certainly prepared to condemn many views.) One-sidedness is intellectual violence, so interpreted, and to practice non-violence is to 'accept' both other persons and their schemas, through conditional assertion. Such assertion means that the non-violent individual neither rejects the validity of Others nor questions their intellectual integrity, even while engaging with them.

There is still the elusive notion of engagement. What sort of mental state should one be in when practising intellectual non-violence? One requires a sense of empathy with that person with whose conclusions one has rational disagreement. It seems to me that this empathy consists in an imaginative location of oneself in the sentiments and attitudes of someone with whose views one is in rational disagreement. By imagining oneself in the intellectual space of the other, one comes to an understanding of what it is to be in that position. The issue of violence is, clearly, the issue of the integrity of the Other. Non-violence is the acceptance of that integrity, an acceptance brought about through an imaginative relocation in the intellectual space and life of the Other. I characterize this relocation as the search for affinity. The Jaina literature does not have anything to say about this concept, but I would hope that it is not incompatible with my interpretation of the Jaina principles. (Whether a Jaina today would accept it is not a matter of anthropological pre-judgement for scholars; the tradition is very much alive, and surely has the freedom to interpret its intellectual history in whatever way is thought suitable.[96])

The approach to the Other that I call the search for affinity sits in a complex relationship with other physically non-violent modes of engagement, in particular, systematic debate and dialogical reasoning. In common with the philosophers of classical India, the Jainas engaged in the epistemological activity of stating and defending knowledge-claims, as part of the project of conveying to others what they believed were their insights. Such activity was framed by a system of epistemic validation whose main features were accepted by all, consisting of various instruments for gaining knowledge. The framework included some minimum standards for what constituted knowledge-claims and what general conditions had to be fulfilled in order for those claims to be accepted as delivering knowledge (although, again, there was much disagreement on how those conditions were fulfilled).[97] This framework was

95 Kundakunda 1964, 3.17.

96 Modern Jaina thinkers point out that the classical Jaina philosophers argue that other schools accept multiplicity themselves, albeit partially and often unwittingly; Shastri 1991, p. 12.

97 This framework – the *pramāṇa* system, from a word whose root means 'to measure' – structures the terminology and direction of standard discussions of classical Indian epistemology; see Matilal 1986, Ch. 1; for a different account, Ram-Prasad 2002a, 'Introduction'.

both rigorous and minimal. It was rigorous enough to provide a common episteme for all the schools, one that allowed mutual access to positions and arguments and was constituted by standards internal to reasoned debate and the search for truth (even when there was no agreement on either the notion or the content of truth). Yet the framework was also minimal, so as to allow for instrumental variations of particular purposes and interests on the part of the different schools.[98]

Now, the Jainas could see that, in a strict way, argument and refutation amounted to epistemic violence, but they held it to be possible to pursue debate provided they could make clear their fundamental, non-violent, commitments. They also argued that, not only was there no suspension of reasoning, but also that the greatest ethical challenge lay at the end of reasoning, when disagreement and difference were (in some way determinable by the standards of reasoning themselves) insurmountable. I would interpret this strategy as implying recognition of the imperative need for affinity when it is reasonable to think that the resolution of difference is not going to lead one to come to terms with the Other in any other way.

Non-violence is the practice adopted in approaching the Other whilst seeking affinity. Affinity, minimally, is the possession of an ability to locate oneself imaginatively in a context that is as sensible – as amenable to clear thinking, comfortable living and fruitful feeling – to oneself as it is to the Other. Suppose we think that a suitably non-violent way of proceeding would be to seek commonality, understanding commonality as the co-occurrence within our own schema and within that of the Other of traits, values, beliefs and other markers of identity. Then, the disquieting prospect could be raised of whether we were committing ourselves pre-discursively to some universalized cultural ontology. Commonality may become the thin end of the wedge of homogenization, whereby finding what the Other is like (or capable of being like) is preliminary to denying Otherness and overcoming the Other. As I have argued, this is a violent mode of approaching the Other.

It may be possible, of course, to think that there is a universal cultural ontology in which commonalities are not given by what we privilege ourselves but by what the Other has. That is to say, they may imply that we are or may become like the Other (instead of the other way around). In some ways, this decentred universalism can carry salutary lessons of humility and contingency, which have their own value. But it is seldom recognized by universalists who identify universalism on their own terms, because they fear precisely the power of the lesson of decentredness. This fear has informed many critics of universalism, who worry (with or without historical justification) that they may be overcome in this way. I propose to grant that non-violence must include freedom from the fear of violence, and if that fear is justifiable, then, identification and attainment of commonalities – as indicators of

98 Although this is clearly not the place for a detailed discussion, such an understanding of the classical Indian philosophic scene cuts across Occidentalist historiographies of universal reasoning. A contrast with this classical Indian framework can be drawn, for example, with Kant's assumption of the internally coherent universality of reasoning (*räsionieren*) in his description of the Enlightenment project, an assumption that leaves no space for particular and instrumentally variant evaluation of reasoning. On this anatomization of Kant's view of universal reasoning, see Foucault 1984.

an eventually realizable monistic universalism of identity – must be rejected. The violence may more normally be through the infliction of our identity on the Other, but it may also come from the fear of being overcome by the Other instead.

Affinity seeks to create engagement without fear, even if it does call for courage. The potency of affinity comes from its combining of, and constituting itself through, two apparently contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, there is the clear recognition of the alterity of that with which one establishes a relationship; it is only because there is the Other that the very logic of relationship becomes possible, after all. On the other hand, there is the sense that one is, or can be, or shares in, the position of the Other. Affinity, in short, respects both the integrity and the accessibility – the boundaries but also the gates – of the Other. Jaina concepts that cohere with this approach to the Other are evocative, and may be translated as the practices of 'affection' and 'disclosure'.[99] The former is how one treats others, with respect and noble speech; the latter is how one presents oneself to others, or how one opens oneself to others, through charity, truthfulness and – significantly – such action as is nuanced to the time and place of encounter.

The key to the notion of affinity is its decentring of the self in the locus of engagement.[100] It is a move by oneself into the spaces where the Other may be met, physically, mentally, conceptually, emotionally, culturally. This is positive non-violence, an active impulsion into the world, in which the presuppositions of selfhood, which imply the prediscursive rightness or default validity of one's schema of life, are not built into the encounter. The Other is not a guest on one's terms in one's house, but someone who is met on the street. In this way, affinity is distinct from another paradigm of engagement with the Other: hospitality. Hospitality in modern Western thought is the constrained right of the stranger (the Other), given because of the common rights of humanity, of course, but given as a matter of law. In it, the engagement is due and through the power and rights of the host.[101] One could argue against this notion that it has a contradiction built into it. It is through my mastery of the house that I can extend hospitality, but to be truly hospitable, I must deny myself

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99 They are *vātsalya* and *prabhāvanā* respectively. Amrtacandra 1933 uses these terms extensively.

100 This supererogatory reading of affinity goes beyond but is not inconsistent with the understanding of it as that which forms between 'natures which, when they meet, quickly lay hold on and mutually affect one another', as Goethe puts it (Goethe 1971, p. 52). Goethe's notion of elective affinity, of course, reads 'affinity of mind and soul' (p. 53) as being fundamentally one with chemical and other physical processes (explicitly in Ch. 4); this is a position to which I do not wish to commit myself. Furthermore, while Goethe is concerned with the re-creation of beings ('one has to watch sympathetically how they [different chemical elements] seek one another out, attract, seize, destroy, devour, consume one another, and then emerge again from this most intimate union in renewed, novel and unexpected shape', says the Captain, p. 56) – and I am in sympathy with that sentiment – my point is that affinity notably involves thinking 'out' of oneself in the engagement with the Other, not merely exploring oneself through (an instrumental) engagement with the Other.

101 Kant 1970.

precisely that mastery.[102] Affinity has no comparable pre-structured asymmetry of location in its model of engagement and so does not build impossibility into itself.

Now, in the contested encounter with the Other, disputation as well as narration of one's position is epistemic violence, since both strategies seek to conquer the Other. Non-violence does not require the final repudiation of dialogue and discussion, as already noted; but it seeks to re-interpret discussion as the exchanging of views in a climate of 'goodwill'. Affinity includes the exchange of views and discussion, even debate for clarification, because, since it is directed to this end and not towards triumph, it can proceed free of violence.

It should be clear that the search for affinity – as the path of non-violence – is neither passive nor aggressive; nor, of course, passive-aggressive. It is dynamic, engaged and self-demanding. Crucially, it is sustained by the imperative of engagement with the Other, which creates an alternative to violent encounter. Essentially, the creative paradox of positive non-violence, manifested in the search for affinity, is its resistance to violence. To follow through my argument, the principles of multiplism lead to the imperative of seeking affinity: multiplex reality calls for a non-violent engagement with the Other that recognizes alterity within a common world.

The result of this attitude, I suggest, is a condition of being that I term heteronomous, and it implies a quite radical revision of our normal conditions of relationality with the Other.

Multiplism and Heteronomy

The doctrine of multiplism should be understood as an affirmation of heteronomy. This is the condition in which we exist in a law-like system in which we are subject to that which is not-self, the Other. It is a condition in which will and resources are spread through, and derived from, extrinsic authority. The contrast, of course, is with autonomy, where the individual functions according to the will and resources intrinsic to it.[103] The authoritative Other has often been conceived as God; and the re-conceptualization of the individual as subject to its own will and not God has been seen as the great achievement of Enlightenment modernity.[104] But this dominant gloss of heteronomy, as an opposition to autonomy, ought really to be understood as homonomy or a law of sameness. The subjection of the individual self to the will and resources of a collective is a condition in which each individual self of the collective is similarly subject. Subjection to God's will is perhaps historically the earliest and dominant form of heteronomy. But setting aside the divine Other, human (and other created) Others are similarly and equally subject to God as oneself (that, indeed, is

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102 Derrida discusses this in Doufourmantelle and Derrida 2000, pp. 71–2 and p. 75ff. He makes a more pointed attack on the Kantian notion elsewhere (Derrida 2000, pp. 3–18, 14): 'As a reaffirmation of mastery ... from the outset, hospitality limits itself'; the impossibility of hospitality must first be overcome.

103 The history of autonomy in Western thought is diverse, and can be traced to Milton, Locke, Rousseau and Kant (Richards 1981). Within Christianity, the trajectory is through Aquinas, Luther and Calvin (Dworkin 1988, p. 13).

104 A precise rendition of this theme given by Don Cuppit (Cuppit 1980, 'Introduction').

the power of God's will). This, without doubt, contrasts with autonomy, in which the self mobilizes out of its own will and with its own resources. Nonetheless, such an apparent heteronomy is obviously also a subjection to the homonomic, divine will. Communitarian theories of the self too contrast with the autonomy of the individual, where autonomy amounts to the law of (the) distinctness of the self. Communitarian heteronomy replaces God with tradition, or society, or some other such non-self entity, usually a collective. There are two broad types of such heteronomy. In one, the source of authoritative will is not itself directly constituted by those selves that are subject to it; the power of tradition might be construed in this way. In another, the collective will is indeed exterior to any individual self but is constituted by all the selves that are subject to it, under some logic of emergence. All these accounts, however, have something in common: they aggregate the will of Others and oneself into a commonality of subjection, into a sameness of law-likeness. Their concern is with how the will of the self is governed, and the question of the (non-divine) Other is merely the question of whether anOther self is likewise governed. This is why I prefer to call them homonomies.

By re-labelling such anti-autonomy as homonomy, I hope to create the space for a different use of heteronomy, as the law of Otherness, or of the influence of each on the other. This is a much more dynamically interactive state of mutual receptivity (affinity again). On my understanding, heteronomy is the subjection of selves to the will and resources of other selves, mutually but disaggegatedly. There is no commonality of subjection here, no ascent to an emergent sameness of law-likeness, but only a pattern of individual interactions of influence between different and particular Others (including oneself). Each Other is an Other but the Other requires me; and I am I, but I require the Other, in the coming to terms with(in) a reality which is realized differently in me and each Other. The crucial move here is a refusal to homogenize Others through subjection to a common will. Will is multiple because the Other is multiple; it is particular because there are particular Others; but each Other, including the self, is subject to other particular wills.

In its resistance to common subjection and in its recognition of the multiplicity of individual will, multiplist heteronomy bears some kinship to the minimal construal of autonomy. But, of course, it differs from classic Enlightenment accounts of autonomy in two ways. For one thing, it affirms natural, pre-discursive inter-subjection of will between individuals, because of its belief in a reality that is constituted by multiplicity. In this, it is different from accounts of autonomy pure and simple, which have to build common laws only instrumentally (for preserving society, for allowing a polity to function, and so on), out of the deliberate – further, constructed, discursive, post-natural – assent of individual self-will to cosmopolitan co-existence. For another, multiplism's affirmation of the will of Others and of the self is not derived from appeal to a single, higher, universal and universalized quality inherent in all.[105] It makes no such universalizing – and homogenizing – move as the classic account of autonomy does. Hence, it is not open to the charge – made against classic

105 A typical account goes that autonomy is 'the respect for an endless set of ... facts ... answering to the schema "P is the author of his own life", where P is a variable whose range is the *universe* of individual persons' (Spector 1992, p. 162; my emphasis).

accounts of autonomy – of overcoming Otherness through a disguised imposition of one schematic value upon others. What the Other's will may be, how it may be manifested, what constitutes it and justifies it are not for multiplism to stipulate, but rather to acknowledge and seek affinities with. So, the will of the individual, while central to the ethical engagement called for by multiplism, is embedded in a network of different inter-subjections.[106]

Multiplism as a metaphysics – especially of cultural ontology – holds there to be an irreducibly diverse but mutually encompassed world of alterities.[107] It is heteronomical in the sense I have described, because it implicates one with the Other and vice versa, not through a transcendental move to a common universality, but by the recognition of being similarly located in each's own respective difference. Mutuality of openness to influence comes from schemas being equally situated – circumscribed – in reality, and in being equally sustainable if different realizations of it.

The multiplist does not take the practice of the world to be thus. But through the self-purificatory practice of non-violence, they mean to treat others as if heteronomy were already attained.

Heterology and Heteronomy: The Path and Goal of Non-violence towards the Other

What I have said, it should be acknowledged frankly, goes beyond what may exegetically be drawn from the Jaina material. Yet it is inspired by an interpretation of Mahāvīra's insight: Jainism is itself only one schema in a multiplex reality, even if that schema itself contains the understanding of multiplexity. The normal motivation to overcome difference (or even just wait for others to let their differences be overcome) that the Jaina might have should be given up in the rigour of inter-subjective heteronomy. Might this result in the disappearance of Jainism? Well, following the argument of these pages, that too would be a Jaina outcome! In any case, a sustained non-violent metaphysics and ethics results from our explorations.

Summing up, then: there is no denial of the need to argue, contest and narrate in defence of certain positions and the attainment of certain ends, even though these might be thought to be epistemically violent activities; but these are tactical

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106 The more Indological reader may query, at this point, my reading of the role of self in Jainism. Is it not the case that the supreme Jaina religious goal is the attainment of a completely fulfilled selfhood that is not subject to attachment to (and the influence of) the world? How is this emphasis on the self to be squared with what has been said about heteronomy? Although I cannot pursue this technical and exegetical topic here, I would suggest the following: the Jaina soteriology of *kaivalya* or simplex selfhood should be seen as a theory of autotely – the goal of selfhood, rather than autonomy – the law of selfhood. This state is necessarily reached through both an insight into the nature of reality (its multiplicity) and an ethical life (of engagement with multiple Otherness consonant with that reality). Autotely therefore requires heteronomy. I am grateful to Christopher Chapple for his discussion with me on this matter.

107 Heteronomy's sense of mutual encompassment is indicated in the technical Jaina terminology for mutuality (*anyonyātmakatva*, literally, inter-selfhood, and *anyonyavyāptibhāva* or inter-pervaded being).

exceptions. They must unequivocally be acknowledged as the regrettable necessity of compulsion. The overarching strategy is of non-violent engagement. In any case, even when the end is self-clarification, where violence to the Other's view may not be the object of desire but merely an outcome of self-analysis, the imperative must be to attain eventually a state of affinity, which is both non-violent in respect of the integrity of the Other and affirmative in its capacity to provide self-fulfilment. As Gandhi, India's greatest modern thinker, who was profoundly affected by Jainism, says:[108]

> It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view and often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics … I very much like the doctrine of the manyness of reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussulman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his … My *anekantavada* is the result of the two doctrines of *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violence).

Multiplism is the metaphysics of and for non-violence. Othering is violence. Othering refers to a sense of a transcendental reality in which the Other is disprivileged for being non-ultimate. One's own schema, in contrast, is held to be natural, that is to say, encoded in the structure of that reality (racially, or by being in possession of revelation, or by being economically successful, or by being the original inhabitants of a land, and so on). The realization of an orderly state of affairs requires clarifying who one is and what the Other is. The Other fails to be consonant with the transcendental state, either by being (i) obdurately, permanently and without option, different; or (ii) as yet unconverted or unhomogenized. Ontologies of difference and sameness, therefore, equally legitimate Othering, even if differently so. Multiplist metaphysics, not only by conceiving itself as a process of engagement, but also by its simultaneous affirmation of the provisionality and the integrity of Otherness, neither violently seeks to overcome nor to ontologize the Other.

Understanding Otherness connects one to – establishes one's affinity with – the Other. Through conditional assertion, multiplism places all on an equal footing.[109] It removes Otherness without denying the Other; for it holds that the self and the Other are mutually obliged to influence each other. It thereby removes the violent condition of separateness. Thus does heterology move into recognition of heteronomy. In this condition, it is not ruled out that values, traits, beliefs and other markers of identity that make up schemas may co-occur in you and the Other. However, there is no expectation based on a monist-universalist metaphysics that this will be so. Co-occurrence will be, then, merely a contingent matter, the significance of which is just that it demonstrates in one way the affinity that we have, an affinity that allows for a coming to terms with ourselves and each other. Since even this co-occurrence

108 Gandhi 1925, p. 17.

109 Here, Karl Apel's notion of 'fundamental claims and duties' says very much what I would want to say: they are 'the equal rights of all possible discourse partners and the equal co-responsibility of all for the discovery and solution of morally relevant problems' (Apel 1999, p. 159).

is without metaphysical expectation, there is no danger of implicitly homogenizing the Other into one's presumptively universal schema. The likeness between oneself and the Other is primarily a matter of empathetic inter-location of one's sensibilities in the schema of the Other, or a recognition of inter-subjection of will; it is the result of the search for affinity. It is that affinity which is the effective realization of the non-violent engagement with the Other.[110]

110 The most fundamentally novel political theory that appears to be consonant with the metaphysics that I have sketched here is the multiculturalism of Bhikku Parekh, in which the political theorist sees his own culture and its place, not from an 'Archimedean standpoint' but 'a kind of immanent transcendentalism' (Parekh 2000, p. 339). This political perspective is built out of three components: 'the cultural embeddedness of human beings, the inescapability and desirability of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, and the internal plurality of each culture' (Parekh 2000, p. 338). It would require a different essay to map this political theory explicitly onto my cultural-moral metaphysics.

Chapter 2

Consciousness and Luminosity: On How Knowledge is Possible

This chapter attempts a highly general and programmatic outline of some interrelated issues in the philosophy of consciousness, contextualizing the outline to the large theme of this book, namely, that the search for knowledge is central to the transformative goal common to most classical Indian schools.

Consciousness (*caitanya/samjñā*) has always had a central role in Indian philosophy. Partly, this is a matter of history, as most of the influential and authoritative Upaniṣads build their metaphysics on the claim that, ultimately, reality is or has some immutable dimension of consciousness (and that much can be granted even by later, more theistic Vedānta thinkers who reject Śaṅkara's sweeping reduction of reality to consciousness). The significance of consciousness, however, also has more systematic intellectual bases.

Every school is committed to giving an account of an ultimate end or highest good (*niḥśreyasa*). That good concerns the subject undertaking to attain it, and subjectivity requiring consciousness, consciousness is an unavoidable factor in any soteriology. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, with the Mīmāṃsā of Kumārila, even those who would deny that there is consciousness in the ultimate state of liberation have to say **something** about its relationship to that state.

The classical Indian soteriologies, of course, always seek to explain how and why knowledge plays a fundamental role in the path to the ultimate goal. In order to clarify the relationship between knowledge and liberation, the Indian philosophers seek to understand what knowledge means. This makes a theory of knowledge a *sine qua non* of all Indian schools. Knowledge, however, is intimately connected to consciousness, since veridical cognitions – that deliver knowledge – are states of consciousness. An exploration of Indian views on the nature of consciousness therefore conceptually precedes even epistemology.

Knowledge, Cognition and Theories of Consciousness

A standard term in Indian philosophy is cognition (*jñāna*) which, understood as an episodic event, is a state which a subjective being undergoes, normally in establishing a particular relationship between that subject and the object of its cognition. (In Nyāya terminology, the object is the *viṣaya* and the subject is the *viṣayin*, but the basic idea here is widely accepted in the tradition in general.) An important epistemological question is as to what the conditions are under which a cognition relates to its object so as to render it veridical (*pramā*). This normally concerns the causal links between

cognition and object as also the ontological status of objects (whether as robustly real or as cognitive constructs or some option in-between).

This question is intimately connected to a major debate on the issue of how such a valid cognition (*prameya*) is rendered accessible to the epistemic subject There are broadly two views. There are those who maintain that the conditions that constitute the occurrence (*utpatti*) and/or the grasp (*jñāpti*) of the valid cognition themselves constitute those conditions for its being rendered accessible to the subject; this is the auto-epistemic theory (*svataḥprāmāṇyavāda*). Others argue that some other conditions (for occurrence and/or grasp) are required to be fulfilled before a cognition can become a piece of knowledge; this is the hetero-epistemic theory (*parataḥprāmāṇyavāda*). This debate is rendered even more complex because different views distinguish between and combine different positions on the occurrence and the grasping conditions.[1]

Underlying this debate is an issue about the general nature of the awareness itself that is required for knowledge. Some elements of the debate over knowledge pertain to objects and physical operators (like sense organs), and are the focus of the debate over the originary conditions for the occurrence of veridical cognitions. But there is the other side of the discussion, which concerns the subjective aspect of knowledge, namely, the **grasping** (or attempted grasping) of an object and its factual context. In order, therefore, to be able to talk about epistemic cognitive states, one needs first to have a general account of cognition's peculiar quality of making its subject have the experience (*anubhava*) of the process. It is this process of undergoing an experience that gives cognition the ability to register reality, where registering it veridically (howsoever that is defined) is to have knowledge. When offering a theory of the nature of veridical cognitions, most schools tend to take their own understanding of the nature of consciousness to be intuitively obvious; but they also often spell out this understanding in some detail.

The relationship between consciousness and cognition is often merely terminological in the classical Indian context. Usually, cognitions are individual states of consciousness, structured and individuated by their content. Sometimes, consciousness is simply identified with cognition in general, and the two are used interchangeably. It is common to put the debate over the nature of consciousness as one over the nature of particular cognitions. Given that knowledge is located in particular (veridical) cognitions, and cognitions are simply individual states of consciousness, it is clear that there is a close connection between the nature of knowledge and the nature of consciousness in Indian thought; and understanding the nature of consciousness is important for understanding knowledge and its soteriological consequences. Classical Indian discussions of consciousness are to be located in this context. However, they are not limited by this context. We can explore these discussions for their implications for contemporary studies of the nature of consciousness.

Cognitions are, in the main, simply states of consciousness; and for Indian philosophers, they are phenomenal. The Indian way of getting at phenomenality

1 Subba Rao 1998. The English terminology is archaic and unhelpful, but this book covers the different theories in some detail.

– through the metaphor of illumination – is at the heart of much of this study. For example, although Indian philosophy does not have an exact equivalent of ‘thought’, to the extent that a thought is a particular state of awareness which is linguistically structured to represent some state of affairs, it would be seen as a type of cognition in Indian philosophy. To have a thought is itself to have something happening to the subject; it is an experience. It must be emphasized that Indian philosophy does not lack a wider repertoire of ideas concerning consciousness that are not themselves seen as conscious. There is a rich debate on the nature of concepts and the role they play in structuring judgements about the world, especially in perception; on what it is that is brought into consciousness when something is remembered or (this is different) recognized; and the nature of the persistent but not constantly entertained properties that dispose consciousness towards some judgement or some psychological state. Closely related though these are to the topic of consciousness, they tend not to be treated as an issue of consciousness itself.[2] Discussions of consciousness clearly presuppose its phenomenality.[3] There can be no such simple (even crude) reductionism as attempts to explain consciousness without mention of phenomenality as has recently been attempted in Western philosophy.[4]

The Indian philosophers therefore offer accounts of consciousness focussed on the peculiar quality of the subject **of** cognition being subject **to** that cognition. The conscious subject of cognition is able to attend upon itself even as it attends to its object. The Indians call this phenomenal feel of consciousness its ‘luminosity’ (*prakāśata*).

Luminosity: Competing Theories on how to Secure the Phenomenality of Consciousness

Classical Indian theories of consciousness focus on a concept captured by the metaphor of luminosity. Invoking the way light falls, they seek to capture the intuition that consciousness somehow makes something manifest. The metaphor became accepted in Indian thought as the way to talk about the defining feature of consciousness.

The basic division of theories of luminosity is well known to students of Indian thought; I hope merely that I can clarify some of the implications of these theories.

There are arguments over in/determinate perception, which bears on this, but the possibility of indeterminate perception entertained by most schools indicates that representational theories of the sort found in contemporary Western philosophy

2 Thus the recent idea of ‘access consciousness’ – regarding information processing, language production, non-conceptual content and the like – would be beside the point in the Indian scheme of things. This is not because the Indian philosophers do not tackle many of these issues but because they are not issues of consciousness for them. On access consciousness, see Davies and Humphreys 1993, pp. 10–15.

3 On phenomenological content, cf. Strawson 1994, pp. 6–7.

4 Any pronouncement from Daniel Dennett would do, but probably the best known is Dennett 1991.

of consciousness – especially the line of thought that takes it as self-evident than intentionality is representational[5] – are not taken seriously.

Luminosity is, intuitively, the manifestedness of consciousness to the conscious subject. It is an analytic feature of debates over the nature of consciousness in Indian thought.[6] This metaphor can mislead: for one thing, despite its special way of revealing objects, it too is an object to our consciousness, whereas what we struggle is express is the way consciousness is to itself. Secondly, and relatedly, a revelation or manifestation is meaningful only as it pertains to us (our consciousness); the revelation by a light is not to the light itself. Thirdly, the relationship between light and object (as also the light and itself) can be reductively explained in terms of physics without any epistemological problem, whereas it is debatable as to whether the relationship between consciousness and its objects (and itself) can be explained reductively. So we should always remember that luminosity is only a metaphor, indicating that the asymmetrical relationship in which a light falls on things in a way they do not on it, suggests something about the relationship between consciousness and its objects.

Luminosity is the rendering of an event as subjective. It is that by which there is an occurrence, which it is like something to undergo. The subjective is the having of experience (*anubhava*). Luminosity is the Indian metaphor for phenomenality, the undergoing by the subject of something else (its object). The philosophers are agreed on all sides that consciousness is phenomenological; it is luminous. The debate is over the constitution of the phenomenality of consciousness. The debate is about what it is for there to be subjectivity.

Before we turn to an outline of that debate, it should be noted that the classical Indian tradition does not conceive of any non-phenomenal consciousness; hence the appeal of the concept of luminosity. It is possible to wonder whether this presupposition is tenable, as there could be a distinction between hearing a sound, which is induibitably phenomenal, and having a thought. The latter might count as a state of consciousness, but does it carry the sort of 'flavour' (*rasa*) – a clustering of qualia, we could say – that hearing a sound (with its many variable, qualitative

5 Seager 1999 is a case to point, seeming incapable of conceiving of intentionality as anything other than (some unclear and, he acknowledges, highly contested) representation.

6 Thomas Nagel famously captured the idea through the phrase 'what it is like to be something' (Nagel 1974). Nagel's point is put as the intuitive consideration that when all the physical facts are described, there are phenomena – usually thought of as entities whose existence consists in their being qualities marking a state (i.e. qualia or some set of mental things) that are still left undescribed. It has been argued that this reduces consciousness to some marginal entity, and that a much richer notion of the what-it's-likeness must be sought, which adverts to our ordinary, social way of interpreting ourselves and others in ways that can never be reduced to the physical ('angry tone of voice', 'nervous doodling', 'worried look'; Rudd 1998). In what follows, I do not want to get drawn into an examination of the different possible ways of construing this phenomenology. I merely want to note that the Indian philosophers at any rate have a powerful sense of the inward presence of consciousness. It will therefore occupy a large place in this programmatic outline of Indian theories of consciousness.

impingements) has? Clearly, if thoughts are phenomenological, they must be so on a much more general construal of the phenomenal. Such a construal must be highly abstract because it goes beyond the rich and specific flavouring of 'typical' phenomenological states associated with the external modes of perception. But the point in support of the Indian consensus is that it is indeed like something to have a thought; every cognition (*jñāna*) – normally conceived as an episodic, contentfully structured state of consciousness – is itself something it is like to have.[7] This appears to have been the dominant Indian view of consciousness, and where it is challenged, there is a deep disagreement over the very nature of what is being debated.

Theories of Luminosity

The Theories of Luminosity Defined

The question is: what is it for consciousness to be 'luminous'? It is possible to rework this debate in terms of what it is to count something as conscious. This is an issue which we will look at towards the end of this study, when suggesting what the classical Indian debates imply for contemporary, largely physicalist, consciousness studies. But for the moment, let us carry on thinking of the debate as having to do with the nature of subjectivity.

There are, broadly speaking, two kinds of views about what constitutes that subjectivity which is the defining feature of consciousness.[8] On the one hand are those views which maintain that to be conscious is to have 'heteroluminosity' (*parataḥ prakāśata*, henceforth PP), and on the other, those who argue for 'autoluminosity' (*svataḥ prakāśata*, henceforth SP). Broadly, for the theory of heteroluminosity, I shall consider the views of Nyāya and the Bhāṭṭa sub-school of Mīmāṃsā, and for autoluminosity, Advaita Vedānta, the later thinking of the Prābhākara sub-school of Mīmāṃsā, and Yogācāra (and syncretic Yogācāra-Madhyamaka) Buddhism.

Virtually every aspect of the views of each school is open to debate and interpretation. I shall therefore start with definitions summing up my understanding of the position of each of these schools. Typically for the Indian philosophers, the formulation is that a state that counts as conscious is a cognitive state; and, it must

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7 Whether all consciousness is phenomenal is a contested issue in the recent Western literature; sufficient for an argument to be made in support of it, for example, Pitt 2004. Indian philosophy in general does not count as 'consciousness' what has sometimes been called 'access' consciousness, which is merely content available for verbal report; Davies and Humphries 1993, p. 10. As we will see, a widespread reading of the Nyāya theory implies that there is non-phenomenal consciousness in just this way, leading to apparently insuperable difficulties for this view. The argument that all content is phenomenological is increasingly influential.

8 Matilal 1986, pp. 141–79, Bimal Matilal makes an attempt to clarify the philosophical consequences of this debate. I follow him on only a few points (and, especially, worry about his conflation of the issue of consciousness with the epistemological question of how one knows that one knows), but acknowledge the inspiration provided by his analytic approach.

be added, they tend to take the paradigmatic cognition to be a perceptual state, like a seeing.[9]

- Nyāya *arataḥ prakāśa* theory (NPP):[10] The occurrence of a (first-order) cognition (*vyavasāya*) consists in the taking of just an object (*artha*) as content (*viśayatva*), and not itself as its own content. Subsequently, there is introspective access to the first-order cognition through an apperceptive second-order cognition (*anuvyavasāya*) which takes the former as its object, in which the first-order cognition is ascribed to the subject.

- Bhāṭṭa *parataḥ prakāśa* theory (BPP):[11] The occurrence of a cognition consists in the undergoing of taking an object as content followed by a higher-order cognition that through the mechanism of analytic presumption (*arthāpatti*), or through inference (*anumiti*) from the 'cognizedness' (*jñātatā*) of the object that is now available to the subject, validly concludes that the first-order cognition has occurred (without ever directly taking the first-order cognition as its object), thereby ascribing it to the subject.

- Yogācāra (-Madhyamaka) *svataḥ prakāśa* theory (YSP):[12] The occurrence of a cognition consists in the formation of content by (i) a conceptually unmediated apprehension (*saṃvedanā*) that there is cognition, thereby allowing for a conceptually mediated apprehension of (ii) the object of cognition. The apprehension of cognition is intrinsic to its occurrence in that the cognition takes itself as its own content, and requires no second-order cognition for an apprehension of its occurrence. The existence of a constructed selfhood as the putative subject of all cognition enables intrinsic apprehension of cognition to be ascribed to this putative subject. (Introspection is a second-order cognition of the original cognition, consisting of (i*) apprehension of its own occurrence and (ii*) the original, first-order cognition as its object.)

- Prābhākara hybrid *svataḥ prakāśa* theory (PHSP):[13] The occurrence of a cognition consists in the formation of a three-fold (*tripuṭi*) content

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9 This means that debates over consciousness often take the form of debates over the nature and typology of perception, into which we cannot enter here; but this tendency is evident in contemporary theories of consciousness as well, for example, Drestkse 1995; Tye 1995.

10 An interpretation of Gaṅgeśa, in Phillips and Tatacharya 2004, p. 588.

11 An interpretation of Kumārila, from Kumārila Bhāṭṭa 1978, V.4, 184–96; Nārāyana 1933, II.ii.89–94, pp. 191–6; an exposition of Pārthasārathi Miśra and various opponents in Sinha 1986, pp. 199–213; and as given in a critical account in Keśava Miśra 2005, pp. 56–9.

12 An interpretation based on Dignāga in Hattori 1968, *k.11ab–k.12cd*, pp. 29–31; and Śāntarakṣita 1978, vv. 2012–84, especially 2012; and also on Śāntarakśita, in one of the few modern rigorous philosophical explorations of the issue in Buddhism, Williams 1998, p. 6ff; and Dreyfus 1997, Ch. 25, pp. 400–15.

13 From Śalikanātha, in Pandurangi 2004, pp. 141–59; Gaṅgeśa, in Phillips and Tatacharya 2004, pp. 575ff; Subba Rao 1998, pp. 54–4; Matilal 1986, p. 143. The developed

constituted by (i) the cognition of its own occurrence, (ii) the cognition of the invariant self which is the subjective bearer of the cognition, and (iii) the object cognized through an appropriate modality. The occurrence of the cognition is therefore also an ascription of it to the subject.

- Advaita *svataḥ prakāśa* theory (ASP):[14] The occurrence of cognition consists in cognition of its own occurrence as an independent pre-requisite for cognition of objects. Understood as consciousness that is self-defining or auto-formal cognition (*svarūpajñāna*), cognition is never its own object. But in including cognition of its own occurrence as the intrinsic condition for its occurrence, this pure cognition provides the enabling condition or capacity (*yogyatva*) for the objective content in specific non-cognitive mental states (*vṛtti*) to be cognized, through its conditioned association with the latter, thereby generating specific cognitive states (*vrttijñāna*). Ascription of cognition to its subject occurs through another association of cognition with an 'I'-form (*ahaṃkāra*) that is unique to the mental states found within one subjective locus.

Clearly, each of these theories carries with it its own specific concepts. We will look at some of them later, but since this chapter is a more programmatic survey of theories of consciousness than an extended study of each, we will do so only briefly.

The major division of the schools, indicated by the type of theory under which each chooses to classify itself, concerns the defining function of consciousness. The *parataḥprakāśa* theories indicate that luminosity is to do with the extrinsic (the other, *parataḥ*); the *svataḥprakāsa* theories, that luminosity is to do with the intrinsic (itself, *svataḥ*). This broad division actually turns out to be profoundly misleading on all sides, since differences between each of the positions tend to be elided or ignored by opponents. In this programmatic reconstruction of the various positions, detail will be all.

I will contrast the two types of theories through the use of two major concepts. PP theories take consciousness to be defined by intentionality, while SP theories take it to be about reflexivity. Broadly, intentionality is the feature of consciousness by which it is about something, by which it takes an object. Reflexivity is the feature wherein whatever thing consciousness is about, it contains within it consciousness of itself. The Naiyāyikas eventually come to hold that being conscious is just to be conscious of things; there is no intrinsic requirement for that consciousness of things to be accompanied by consciousness that it is of those things. In their different ways, the two Mīmāṃsā schools try to keep both features in consciousness, although defining it primarily in one or the other. (Viśiṣṭādvaita too tries to reconcile them but we are not able to consider it here.) The Yogācārins and the Advaitins maintain that consciousness is primarily about being transparent to itself, and that being about

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view of Śalikanātha differs from an earlier one developed by Prabhākara himself (Jha 1911, p. 147).

14 Citsukha 1956, pp. 4–5; Madhusūdana 2005, pp. 768–78; Dharmarāja 1942, I.51–6, pp. 24–5.

things is secondary to it, even dispensable in certain soteriologically ‘pure’ states. This is not saying much, since each concept is developed in different ways by the schools, as we will soon see. Here, I wish to indicate that the basic contrast I make has been anticipated at least twice by notable contemporary Indian philosophers.

The idea that these two concepts as contrasts help – as it were – illuminate Indian philosophy of consciousness was first mooted by Jitendranath Mohanty.[15] He identifies the SP theories as being concerned with consciousness as reflexivity, but strangely, correlates intentionality, not with PP theories but their allied thesis of *saviṣayakatva*, that is, that cognitions have objective content. He argues that intentionality is not adequately understood in Indian thought and reflexivity not adequately understood in Western thought; and justifies the former claim by arguing that since intentionality is tied to objective content, Indian thinkers always imagine that intentional objects have to be real ones and thereby limit intentionality to a metaphysical commitment to realism. But while it is true that those who argue for intentionality as the defining feature of consciousness are indeed metaphysical realists, intentionality is not primarily about objective content (*viṣayakatva*) but the nature of phenomenality (luminosity or *prakāśatva*). This will be clear from the fact that SP theorists, while arguing that consciousness is fundamentally reflexive, also seek to secure intentionality in their account, within whatever metaphysical position they hold, whether realist or not. So I think that we should look at Indian conceptions of intentionality not as being flawed versions of the Western idea, but as having their own characteristic value. (I shall not here evaluate the corollary, that Western philosophy has not engaged properly with reflexivity.)

Paul Williams, too, makes the distinction between reflexivity and intentionality in the context of the synthetic Yogācāra-Madhyamaka thinker Śāntarakṣita.[16] He insightfully notes that Śāntarakṣita’s theory should secure both reflexivity and intentionality. In this, my discussion is in agreement with him – those who argue for reflexivity as the primary feature of consciousness must explain intentionality. Williams then intriguingly identifies reflexivity with luminosity, and intentionality with awareness. This remark is confined to a short footnote, but I understand him as saying that reflexivity is the general nature of all consciousness (i.e. ‘luminosity’) for Śāntarakṣita, whereas specific states of consciousness – which appear to be about objects – are states of ‘awareness’ and must be explained in intentional terms. In the larger context of other Indian schools, my understanding is that PP theories define luminosity itself as intentional; so I read the twin concepts somewhat differently from Williams as well. However, Mohanty and Williams should be acknowledged as pioneers for drawing on earlier Western ideas while conceptualizing the issue of consciousness in Indian thought – incidentally, before the explosion in contemporary Western studies of consciousness.

15 Mohanty 1972, Part Three, Ch. 1.

16 Williams 1998b, pp. 26–7, fn. 10.

The Nyāya parataḥ prakāśa Theory: Pure Intentionality

It is a matter of much debate in the tradition as to exactly what is extrinsic about luminosity in the Nyāya theory of consciousness. Let us recall the view as given in the synthetic definition provided earlier:

> Nyāya *parataḥ prakāśa* theory (NPP) The occurrence of a (first-order) cognition (*vyavasāya*) consists in the taking of just an object (*artha*) as content (*viṣayatva*), and not itself as its own content. Subsequently, there is introspective access to the first-order cognition through an apperceptive second-order cognition (*anuvyavasāya*), which takes the former as its object, in which the first-order cognition is ascribed to the subject

Nyāya's understanding of consciousness – of what constitutes luminosity – depends, in a fundamental way, on the notion of an object of consciousness. For a state to count as conscious is for it to be 'about' something; that something is the object **of** that state of consciousness, and in being so, gives content to that state. Nyāya therefore characterizes consciousness (states of cognition) as 'being with object' (*saviṣayakatva*), that is, a particular cognition is what it is by virtue of being about that object.

Nyāya ties cognition and its object together through the paired terms of *viṣayatā* and *viṣayitā*: the property of being an object and the property of having an object; we could talk of them, literally, as 'object-hood' and 'objectee-hood'. The object-hood of an object is that by which it is distinctly that thing and not another thing; in other words, what constitutes its identity. It is the condition of being an object (of a cognition). In relation to cognition, the object being that object and not another, makes it the **content** of that cognition, the property by virtue of which the cognition is of that object and not another object. (The content of a cognition distinguishes that cognition from another.) The objectee-hood of cognition is its being **about** that object (in other words, it is the 'objectwardness' of cognition[17]). This can be understood as **intentionality**.[18] Content and intentionality are paired in Nyāya, in the cognition-object relationship.

This conception of intentionality should be understood in a minimal way in the Nyāya (and, generally, the classical Indian) context. The aboutness of cognition is interpreted causally as being, through some mechanism, prompted by (and only by) some particular object. In the presence of the object and the appropriate conditions (such as sensory contact), the cognition occurs, and that cognition cannot occur in the absence of that object. This is far from implying that the cognition represents the object as such-and-such. This is important to keep in mind these days, because most contemporary Western theories take intentionality to amount to representation: a cognition being about white snow is interpreted as a cognition representing snow as white. The Indian thinkers usually agreed that there was a separate, if closely related, issue about whether, how and when cognitions were representational through the

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17 This is Arindam Chakrabarti's translation of *viṣayitā*; personal communication.

18 In the Western context, of course, Franz Brentano first articulated this use of the term in the 1870s, when he maintained that all and only what he called mental states, are about things in this way; Brentano 1973.

application of concepts (*kalpanā*). Nyāya for a long while did think that any grasp of objects was indeed representational; but gradually, the later Naiyāyikas came to the conclusion that, while epistemic states (cognitions aiming for veridicality) required conceptualizing the object grasped, cognitions in themselves could be causally correlated to objects without being conceptually loaded (i.e. without being representational). Indeed, to mark the fact that this was a close but distinct issue, Gaṅgeśa treats the nature of conception-free (*nirvikalpaka*) cognition in the chapter following the one on introspection and the nature of luminosity.

The developed view in the older Nyāya tradition, as put by Udayana but adhered to by Gaṅgeśa,[19] is that intentionality is a uniquely constitutive feature of a cognition. It is a *svarūpasaṃbandha*; literally, an 'auto-formal relationship': in a relationship R between two entities *a* and *b*, such that *a*R*b*, to be *a* is itself to have the property R*b*.[20] It is constitutively or naturally an aspect of *a* that it has a relationship with *b*; the property of being tied to *b* makes *a* what it is. The form of *a* is constituted by its relationship with itself, albeit nominalized as another entity. Being intentional is cognition's nature; and being thus, it is a cognition by virtue of being about an object. For Nyāya, the auto-formal relationship of intentionality is built into a simple (or 'naive') realism. For a relationship to exist is for the two things it relates to also exist; and to exist is to occupy a place in an ontology. In saying that cognition is intentional, the Naiyāyikas are saying that cognition is constitutively related to objects; and for cognition to exist, its object (expressed primarily in terms of its externality to cognition, its independence from cognition, and its having the potential to be cognized in the appropriate circumstances) must exist too.

The key feature of the Nyāya view of consciousness, then, is that for a state to be luminous is for it to have objective content – that is to say, equally, for that state to be of an object. Phenomenality **is** intentionality.

However, the Naiyāyikas also notice that, while the standard cognition might be of, say, a pot (and therefore the 'feel' or 'flavour' of shape, colour, and so on, is explained through the constitutive directedness of that phenomenal state towards the object possessing that shape, colour, and so on), there is also a different cognition possible: that I am cognizing a pot. They maintain that the cognition 'this is a pot' is different from the cognition, 'I am cognizing a pot'; the latter, in fact, has the former as its content, being directed at it. They call it *anuvyavasāya* – 'after-cognition', apperception or introspection. This distinction suggests that there are two different things going on in consciousness – the undergoing of contact (*sannikarṣa*) with an object, leading to phenomenal feel; and the grasp of the fact that this undergoing has occurred. The latter clearly does something that the former does not: it enables the subject of consciousness to reflect upon what has occurred.

19 See Phillips and Tatacharya 2004, p. 246ff; on Gaṅgeśa's adherence to Udayana's earlier formulation.

20 The standard Western formulation, of course, would be: *a* if and only if *a*R*b*; but modal language sits uneasily with classical Indian formulations.

The Bhāṭṭa parataḥ prakāśa Theory: Intentionality and Second-order Reflexivity

It appeared as if the Naiyāyikas initially believed that the subject could become conscious of its own states only upon the occurrence of a second-order cognition. Nyāya philosophers themselves took a while to clarify the significance of this distinction, and we will look at the difficulties caused by the idea of 'after-cognition' when examining the criticism that they left their theory open to the charge of infinite regress.

The implication that a second-order event somehow completes the process of becoming conscious of an object is brought out clearly by the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas. To reiterate, their position is as follows:

> Bhāṭṭa *parataḥ prakāśa* theory (BPP): The occurrence of a cognition consists in the undergoing of taking an object as content followed by a higher-order cognition that through the mechanism of analytic presumption (*arthāpatti*) or through inference (*anumiti*) from the 'cognizedness' (*jñātatā*) of the object that is now available to the subject, validly concludes that the first-order cognition has occurred (without ever directly taking the first-order cognition as its object), thereby ascribing it to the subject.

On this theory, consciousness in indeed a two-stage process. First, cognition is intentional in that there is formation of content through the mechanism of taking something as the object of cognition; but that by itself does not allow the subject to become fully conscious of the object. The formation of content brought about through sensory contact is a 'grasping' (*avagraha*). Now, this might seem sufficient for the subject to be understood as being conscious of the object; the later Nyāya view tends towards this conclusion. The Bhāṭṭas have secured intentionality: the object should be grasped by the cognitive process, and the consequence must be an experience, a registering of the object in consciousness. But they obviously assume that this is not yet consciousness as such, for the merely mechanical connection between cognitive apparatus and object appears to imply a phenomenal 'blindness' or 'blankness' on the part of the possessor of that apparatus. Something more is needed.

The Bhāṭṭas appear to be trying to reconcile two different intuitions about phenomenality. On the one hand, like the Naiyāyikas, they are committed to a robust realism in which objects exist independently of cognition and must therefore extract conformity from the latter. It is cognitions that must depend for their character on the nature of their objects. Cognitions must therefore be explained in terms of the objects they are cognitions of; in short, they must be explained in terms of intentionality. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa compares cognition with a sense-organ such as the eye, which sees an object but not itself; he says there is nothing incoherent about cognition illuminating something without illuminating itself.[21] Luminosity is clearly intentionality here. On the other hand, subjectivity seems to require awareness not only of the features of the cognized object but of the cognition itself. That one is seeing a red, round pot appears to be a significant aspect of the seeing of a red, round pot; and while the intentional cognition secures the latter, it would appear that something further is need to secure for the agent the awareness that such a cognition

21 Kumārila 1978, V.4.186.

has occurred. The Bhāṭṭas grant that, without some sort of higher-order grasp of the cognition of object, the subject would find some elements of its own experience inaccessible (thereby rendering moot the nature of experience). At the same time, the Bhāṭṭas also maintain that the cognition itself should not be thought of as becoming an object of an inner perception of it, on pain of regress. So the subject's grasp of its cognition cannot be a higher-order perception.

In short, the Bhāṭṭas feel that ascription of the cognition to its bearer is required for consciousness as such. Of course, this ascription is not to a particular person, for one may suffer amnesia and not lack phenomenality. Rather, the ascription is to whoever it is that is conscious at this stage; and this can be granted, although it hints at a metaphysical theory of self that we cannot go into here.

There are three elements so far to this theory: cognition is of an object; the occurrence of that cognition must itself be cognized in order for the subject to be aware of its own cognition (i.e. for the cognition to be self-ascriptive); but the cognition cannot itself directly – perceptually – be grasped by the subject, and so its occurrence must be detected in some other way. This leads to a problematic element of the theory. If the subject is to know that cognition has occurred, in order to become fully conscious of what it has experienced, what can trigger that valid conclusion for itself? (We can then look at the question of how that conclusion is brought about.)

In order to explain how awareness that a cognition has occurred is brought about, the Bhāṭṭas offer the peculiar notion of the property of cognizedness that is supposed to become a feature of a cognized object. The occurrence of the intentional cognition permits the subject to think of the object cognized. Noticing the object is also to notice it as a *cognized* object. Thus the subject realizes (in some way) that the cognition of the object has to have occurred in the first place. This realization completes the phenomenal awareness of the object.

In the complete consciousness of the object, it would appear there are three layers: the impingement of redness, roundness, potness, and so on, on the sensory apparatus, the deployment of the conceptual repertoire including 'pot', 'red' and 'round' in the subject's awareness, and the ascription of the cognition of the red, round pot to the subject of it. But importantly and contentiously, it is the registering of the object as a cognized entity which triggers the subject's representation of the object of cognition. This is contentious because the Bhāṭṭas do not talk about the object-as-cognized in a purely nominal way; they say that the object actually comes to have a property called cognizedness at the point of being cognized. It is a real change in ontological status, rather than merely a way of talking about the subject noticing that it is now cognizing an object and therefore concluding that it must have had a cognition of that object.

How does the subject become aware of its cognition, upon noticing the cognizedness of the object? Kumarila suggests that it is through the epistemic mode of analytic presumption (*arthāpatti)*. This mode is held by the Bhāṭṭas (and the Advaitins) to be distinct from inference. Setting aside the question of whether or not it is actually a species of inference, analytic presumption is held to proceed as follows.[22] An analytic presumption is a conclusion that alone explains the conjunction

22 Ibid., v. 8 on a statement and defence of this concept.

of two assertions. If Caitra is alive and it is perceived that Caitra is not in the house, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that he is outside the house. It could not be otherwise (*anyathānupapatti*). We can see that this is an analytic statement, since the conclusion follows only from the elements of the two assertions; it is so by definition, given pre-existing knowledge and the triggering perception. At the same time, it is contingently based on empirical facts: it just so happens that we find the world to be one in which physical bi-location is not possible. According to its proponents, it is not like inference for a variety of reasons. The arguments are long and complex on both sides (the Naiyāyikas insisted that presumption was simply inference). But the key claim in favour of presumption is that the conclusion, while requiring empirical facts to hold just as they do in inference, is strictly licensed by the conceptual mapping of the relationship between the facts. In inference, by contrast, investigation of the world is needed to find evidence that supports the conclusion. In the inference: 'if there is smoke seen on the mountain, there must be an unseen fire', the relationship between smoke and fire is established inductively through examples of places (i) where smoke is seen with fire and (ii) no smoke is seen where there is no fire.[23] But in presumption, no further investigation is needed beyond seeing that the live Caitra is not in the house; the conclusion that he is outside is licensed strictly by the terms of what is already known.[24]

Kumārila's implicit argument is that the cognizedness of objects analytically licences the presumption that there has been cognition of the object. From the two facts – (i) the prior knowledge that cognitions bring about the cognizedness of objects, and (ii) perceiving that this object is cognized – one presumes that there has been a cognition in this instance. The presumption is a higher-order cognition that structurally follows from the occurrence of the first-order grasp of the object.

Pārthasārathi explains the concept of the object taking on the property of cognizedness in terms of the structure of any action, where cognition is itself understood as an action. An action has both an object of action (*karma*) as well as the objective of action, namely, its result (*phala*), which inheres in the object. So, the object of cognition (*jñeya*) has in it the potential of its fruit, cognizedness. Provocatively, he draws a domestic analogy: cooking the rice produces 'cookedness' in it; so too with cognizedness. An object which has been cognized – thereby coming to possess the property of cognizedness – is ontologically distinct from one that has not. (The Nyāya response given by Srīdhara to that is that we can distinctly perceive the difference between uncooked and cooked rice, but no such change is evident in an object.[25] One could respond that there is indeed a difference in objects too – after we see that an object has been cognized, we also understand that it was not cognized before. The only disanalogy is that with the cookedness of rice, we perceive both

23 For a demonstration of the need for this twin investigative requirement, see Ram-Prasad 2002b.

24 Nirmalya Guha is writing a thesis in the Department of Religious Studies, Lancaster University, arguing for the epistemic power of presumption; the term 'conceptual mapping' as the analytic relationship between empirical facts in presumption is due to him.

25 Sinha 1986, p. 204.

stages, but with cognizedness of an object, we only infer the earlier one by the very nature of what has changed.)

Pārthasārathi takes it for granted that the higher-order cognition (i.e. the thought) about the cognition is indeed necessary, since that is what delivers full consciousness. However, he appears to think that the higher-order cognition is inferential rather than presumptive. The inferential grasp of the occurrence of the intentional cognition (delivered by inferring from the uniquely identifying mark (*atiśaya*) of cognizedness that the object now exhibits) allows the subject be aware of the occurrence of that cognition. But whereas reading the move to the second-order cognition as an inferential one might make it more appealing to someone who rejected the very idea of analytic presumption, it is perhaps more persuasive in Bhāṭṭa terms to see it as presumption. It can always be said – as the Prābhākara and Naiyāyika do – that if the second-order cognition that brings luminosity is inferential, then there will be an infinite regress: each time there is an inference that it takes a particular quality – namely, cognizedness – as a licence validly to conclude that there has been a cognition, that inferential cognition itself will require some further mark in order to lead to a further inference that it is valid …On the other hand, if the second-order cognition is an analytic presumption, then it achieves cognitive closure, since it is valid purely on its own terms. There is no regress. It is a pity that the Bhāṭṭa theory came to be seen as one requiring inference rather than presumption, since its opponents could dismiss it thus.

The property of cognizedness is important because it is only by cognizing anew the object-that-has-been-cognized and finding in it the property of having-been-cognized (i.e., the property of cognizedness) that it is presumed that the first-order cognition of the object has taken place. The cognition that 'I see the pot' is thus broken into different elements: the sensory contact with the pot, the registering of the informational content of the pot in the cognitive apparatus of the subject, the noticing of the object as cognized, and the analytic presumption that there is cognition of the object. The phenomenal occurrence is completely described only by the full sequence.

We can conclude that, for the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsaka, the intentional cognition must be phenomenal, since it is only because of that cognition that the subject actually notices the object as being cognized (or as they say, the subject perceives the mark of cognizedness in the object). At the same time, this is insufficient for luminosity as such, since the reflective conclusion that the cognition has occurred is also required for consciousness. Luminosity is more than phenomenality; it includes a reflective thought about the phenomenal object: there has been a cognition of this object.

An important element of this account is that the first-order cognition itself never becomes the object of the second-order cognition. The second-order cognition's object is the very object of the first-order cognition, except that it is now that object qualified by the property of cognizedness. This is a contrast to the Nyāya account, in which the first-order cognition becomes the object of an introspective cognition, if and when the latter happens. This means that the Bhāṭṭa account is rigorously intentional: at all times, the cognition is only **of** the object. The subject becomes aware of the awareness of the object only indirectly; the first-order cognition never becomes the object of another cognition. Indeed, cognitions are never objects. Any

higher-order cognition takes only the original object as content. Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā appears to have a strong vehicle–content distinction: there may be a nested series of vehicles, namely, ever-higher order cognitions, but the content – that is, the original object – remains the same. Kumārila points out the simple psychological truth that people stop having iterative (*punarpunaḥ*) thoughts about a cognition of an object; that is why there is no regress of introspection in actual life, whatever the logical possibility of it.

The question here is whether the very concept of cognizedness is not circular: surely, we need to know of the occurrence of a cognition before we can say of an object that it has the property of cognizedness? But the Bhāṭṭa could respond that there is no circularity. The subject simply has the first-order cognition – that is, has the qualitative impingement of the sensible features of the object on the appropriate sense-organ – and that is what allows the subject to notice the object. At this stage, there is no awareness of the occurrence of the cognition, only of the sensible features of the object itself. But it is by definition this perception of the object that makes the object take on the property of cognizedness. It is the subject's becoming aware of the phenomena caused by the object that constitutes the object's coming to possess the property of cognizedness. And coming into possession of the property of cognizedness allows the subject to presume that the object has been cognized. There is no circularity evident here.

The greater problem is the apparently arbitrary metaphysical notion of a real property formed merely from the cognition of it, as if cognition had some kind of impact on the object. Yet, on balance, we should keep in mind that the property is a metaphysical and not a physical one. Our disorientation may come from thinking confusedly of the property as a physical change in the object. But, just as we can think of someone gaining wisdom as wiser because of experience (even if there is no resulting white hair or lined eyes to physically show this), maybe we can think of an object as gaining cognizedness through its being an intentional object. (It goes without saying that the object will have as many cognizednesses as there are cognitions of it; but the Indian philosophers in the main treat this as a detail, however complex.)

In any case, we can see from all this that for Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, cognition is conceptual all the way down. All consciousness is representational, since a higher-order cognition (we could call it a structured thought about the initial intentional cognition) is required for consciousness of objects to be attained. But, for Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, this is not by any means a reduction of consciousness to the higher-order thought of it. Rather, they mean to say that full consciousness is the indirect grasp of a cognition by a higher-order one.[26] The Bhāṭṭās thus demand reflectivity rather than reflexivity. The second-order cognition provides that reflection on the first-order one.

26 One must therefore note that while a theory of higher-order thought, the Bhāṭṭa account is not an anticipation of contemporary HOT (Higher-Order Thought) theories of consciousness. These seek to reduce consciousness to a mental state, in itself stated in physicalist terms, that grasps the first-order occurrence; the first-order occurrences themselves can then be explained in terms that do not involve phenomenality; Rosenthal 1993, pp. 197–223. But a physicalist reading of the Bhāṭṭa theory is eminently possible,

When they say that consciousness is heteroluminous, the Bhāṭṭas mean that every cognition is illuminated by some *other* cognition. By contrast, we can say that Naiyāyikas eventually clarify that, when they talk of heteroluminosity, they means that every cognition illuminates some **other** thing. A thoroughly misleading equivocation over the 'other' in the idea of cognition being other-illuminating leads these two schools to apparently come down on the same side of the debate, but the difference between them is profound.

The Yogācāra svataḥ prakāśata Theory: Reflexivity and the Metaphysical Denial of Objects

The Nyāya and Bhāṭṭa theories are challenged by those who adhere to the auto-luminosity thesis. But here again, there is much that is not common to the different schools which propound this thesis.

In some ways, the analysis of the constitution of consciousness was inaugurated by the Yogācāra Buddhists. This was natural, given their metaphysical commitment to the claim that the world which is presented as external in our cognition is actually a cognitive construct. In some fundamental sense, there is only consciousness (*cittamātra*), and therefore providing the defining feature of consciousness is a vital task. The metaphysics of Yogācāra (and the syncretic Yogācāra-Madhyamaka of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla) is inextricably related to its understanding of consciousness (in a way that makes it much more difficult to do the sort of bracketing possible with the brahmanical schools, the latter of which will be explored in the last part of this chapter). Nevertheless, even if their reduction of the world to cognitive constructs is not persuasive to contemporary materialist realism, they nonetheless offer interesting insights into how to go about thinking of the defining feature of consciousness. To reiterate, their definition of luminosity is as follows:

> Yogācāra (-Madhyamaka) *svataḥ prakāśa* theory (YSP): The occurrence of a cognition consists in the formation of content by (i) a conceptually unmediated apprehension (*saṃvedanā*) that there is cognition, thereby allowing for a conceptually mediated apprehension of (ii) the object of cognition. The apprehension of cognition is intrinsic to its occurrence in that the cognition takes itself as its own content, and requires no second-order cognition for an apprehension of its occurrence. The existence of a constructed selfhood as the putative subject of all cognition enables intrinsic apprehension of cognition to be ascribed to this putative subject. (Introspection is a second-order cognition of the original cognition, consisting of (i*) apprehension of its own occurrence and (ii*) the original, first-order cognition as its object.)

It is Dignāga[27] who first articulates the idea that there must be more to consciousness (of objects) than just taking objects in content; there must be a reflexive grasp of the

providing we bracket their larger concerns; the concluding part of this chapter looks at the potential for physicalism through bracketing strategies in contemporary Indian philosophy.

27 Dignāga in Hattori 1968, *I. k.9–10* on the dual-aspect; *11ab* on introspection; *11c–d* on memory; *12a–12b$_2$*.

occurrence of the consciousness of objects. He gives two arguments in support of this: one is about introspection, the other about recollection.

We have seen Nyāya argue for introspective access to cognitions that have already occurred; before them, Dignāga had neatly summed up the nature of introspection; that is, a second-order reflection on what one has experienced. He recognizes that introspection itself has an intentional character. For introspection to be **about** a certain prior cognition, say, 'blue the day before' (rather than another, say, 'green yesterday'), it must be of a cognition 'in conformity with the object' of that first-order cognition. But, he goes on to argue, in order to be introspection, a second-order cognition must be reflexive in the first place. It must be aware of itself as taking two things together as its own object(s): the first-order cognition and the first-order cognition's object. If an introspective, second-order cognition did not intrinsically carry the fact of its occurrence in its own content – if, in short, it were not reflexive – then it would be indistinguishable from the first-order cognition of the object. In all cases, there would simply be an intentional cognition – a cognition whose content was purely of its object.

It is important to see here that Dignāga is not arguing that an introspective, second-order cognition is required for the subject of cognition to be aware of a first-order cognition. The introspective cognition does not deliver reflexivity. Rather, by looking closely at introspective cognition, we understand that only if it were reflexive could it be distinguishable from the first-order cognition of an object. It is undeniable that there is such a thing as introspection (namely, second-order, reflective access to the first-order cognition of object). Consequently, if introspective cognition can only be explained through its being reflexive, then reflexivity is necessary. But a second-order cognition is not different in its nature from the first-order one, only different in its temporal occurrence and the object it takes. This is implicit in the argument: whatever is proved of the nature of second-order cognition is true of its first-order counterpart. So it is with reflexivity. We indirectly prove that, just as the introspective cognition is aware of itself, the first-order cognition must be aware of itself too. It is the analysis of introspective cognition that allows us to see how cognition in general is reflexive.

This is an influential line of thought. Dignāga argues that introspection is possible only if reflexivity is granted in the first place; otherwise, there were would an infinite regression of introspection, without any access to the content of the first cognition. The Nyāya thinkers who came after him struggled to explain introspection without recourse to reflexivity, and were accused of being caught in a regress of non-reflexive introspections, because many (including, it would appear, earlier Naiyāyikas themselves) thought that introspection secured reflexivity in Nyāya. We will look at the question of regress separately, after having considered the other SP theories.

Dignāga seeks to strengthen his claim for reflexivity through a further argument, this time concerning memory. He says that when we have a memory of something ('blue' in the standard example of the Buddhists), the recollection is not simply of that blue; there is also the memory of the mode in which that blue was encountered in consciousness. In short, both 'blue' and 'the seeing of blue' are present in the memory. Dignāga argues that the former cannot be recollected in isolation, since seeing the blue is intrinsic to the memory of it. If the subject did not have the memory of

seeing the blue, it would not have the memory of the blue. On this phenomenological claim hangs the structural one that consciousness is intrinsically reflexive. Dignāga maintains that his analysis of the phenomenology of memory establishes the claim that, at the time of the original visual cognition of blue, there must have been a reflexive grasp of the occurrence of the visual cognition of blue. The cognition must have been aware of itself even as it was aware of the blue. If this were not the case, there would be no recollection.

We have to be careful in understanding what Dignāga is claiming here. He should not be taken as saying that in recollecting the seeing of blue, we are also recollecting every phenomenal element that clustered around the original seeing. When seeing the blue one might have also been dizzy at the same time, and yet in recollecting the blue and the seeing of it, not recollect feeling dizzy. There is no need for the Yogācārin to make the implausibly strong claim that all phenomenality must be contained in reflexivity.[28] But Dignāga should be interpreted as maintaining that the recollection of the blue carries with it some sense of the presence of a cognition of it; there is always some perspectival relationship with the blue in our recollection of the original cognition. The object alone does not occur in the recollection, because otherwise, as with introspection, there will be no way of subjectively distinguishing between a recollection and a perception. Unless the cognition contains both (i) an awareness of a (constructed) object and (ii) an awareness **that** it is about such an object, second-order cognitions like introspection and recollection will not be possible. Dignāga takes this to prove that, although at the time of the cognition of the object there need not be any understanding that reflexivity is in play, an analysis of recollection shows that it is possible only because the original cognition was both of an object and of itself.

The Dignāga-based argument of Yogācāra, followed by Dharmakīrti and others, is that consciousness is reflexive because it intimates itself in two ways. First, it is about itself in the metaphysical sense that the object of any particular cognition is itself part of cognition: merely the objectual aspect of a cognition rather than an objective – that is, cognition-independent – entity. To be aware of an object simply is to be aware of a cognitive construct, and hence of some aspect of cognition itself. Second, phenomenological analysis (of introspection and recollection) shows that the cognition also has a subjective aspect: that part of cognition that takes the cognition to about an 'object'.

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla clarify that this Yogācāra model of consciousness should not be seen as cognition taking both a thing and itself as its objects. The self-cognition of reflexivity is not to be understood, incoherently, as a situation in which

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28 In an incisive essay, Ganeri cautions against just this confusion common in much Western epistemology, arguing that we must distinguish between 'the phenomenological quality of perception' and the 'subjective aspect'. However, I would argue that 'subjectivity' itself is, in the broad sense of luminosity, 'phenomenal' but that the phenomenological is a complex array of 'feels' or 'flavours'. Furthermore, whereas Ganeri understands Dignāga to be making a distinction between recollection of past experiences and that of past events, I interpret him as saying that recollections are – in the minimal sense of awareness of having undergone the events – always of past experiences. This is precisely what constitutes reflexivity; Ganeri 1999.

one entity is both agent and action.[29] Rather, reflexivity is constitutive of cognition in the sense that cognition does not need another cognition to cognize its own content (its 'form' or *rūpa*), but at the same time, it is does not remain unknown (*aviditam*) to itself.[30] That is to say, explicitly unlike the Bhāṭṭa theory, it does not need a further, second-order cognition for the subject to become conscious of what has entered cognitive content; but unlike the Nyāya theory (although it is not clear whether Śāntarakṣita had this in mind), cognition does not remain purely intentional.[31]

The Yogācāra understanding of reflexivity should be seen as a two-stage argument that involves an idealist denial that objects are distinct from cognition of them. First, the nature of cognition: the cognition **of** an object is itself also cognition **that** it is about that object. If this were not the case, the intentionality of cognition would not be luminous, and cognition would be phenomenally 'blank' – 'inert' (*jaḍa*) – and without grasp of its own existence; and it must first be effective on itself before it can be effective on something else, such as an object.[32] In order for the aboutness of cognition to be possible, cognition must first have some other quality, namely, the ability to include the fact of its occurrence within its own phenomenal content: in other words, the cognition must have the capacity (*yogyata*) to reveal itself. Reflexivity is the prime requirement for luminosity. But – granting that cognition is primarily reflexive – this might suggest that, in order to be reflexive, cognition must require intentional objects. Kumārila's objection to the *svasaṃvedana* theory is that since no one thing can have two functions (*vyāpāra*), consciousness too cannot be both reflexive and intentional at the same time, functioning on itself and on an object.[33] That is why, having settled on rigorous intentionality as the primary requirement for luminosity, the Bhāṭṭa theorist takes the secondary requirement to be reflective and indirect grasp of the intentional cognition. But this objection has no force against Yogācāra metaphysics. Kumārila's argument against dual functionality is based on a metaphysical realism in which there are objects independent of cognition, on which cognition is strictly dependent. But Yogācāra metaphysics is quite different.

This leads to the second stage of the argument: revisionary metaphysical analysis shows that objects are in fact cognitive constructs.[34] The argument for reflexivity in Yogācāra is really part of the argument for *cittamātra*, that is, the theory that ultimately, there is only irreducible consciousness – neither object nor individual

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29 Śāntarakṣita with Kamalaśīla 1978, vv. 2000–1.

30 Ibid., v. 2011.

31 I am indebted to Paul Williams here for his acute remark that there are two types of self-awareness here: one is the cognition of the object which turns out actually to be part of cognition itself; and the other is the constitutive cognition of its own occurrence. But, as he points, out, the former collapses into the latter, regardless of whether that is what Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla intended or not. Since the objectual aspect of a cognition is itself part of consciousness, to be aware of that aspect is to be aware of the fact of consciousness itself; Williams 1998b, pp. 32–3; and personal communication.

32 Śāntarakśita 1978, vv. 2020–2.

33 Kumārila 1978, V.4. 184–7.

34 The *locus classicus* is Dharmakīrti 1968, II. 212–3. The entire discussion of the *Tattvasaṃgraha* and *Pañjika* on auto-intimation or *svasaṃvedana* is embedded in the chapter on the critique of the external world (*bahīrarthaparīkṣā*).

subject.[35] They are, indeed, part of cognitive content. So intentionality is a reflexive feature of consciousness, since the intentional object is ultimately a cognitive construct. The '*sva*' of *svasaṃvedana* initially does intentional duty: it is about the objectual aspect (the form of the grasped – *grāhyākāra*), but since it turns out that this aspect is actually part of cognitive content, grasping the intentional object is actually grasping itself! So intentionality is phenomenality, in this idealist ontology.

In all this, it must always be kept in mind that when the Yogācārin talks about reflexivity as the cognition's awareness of its own occurrence, the self-ascription involved is one peculiar to all Buddhist theories: the ascription is strictly to that cognitive occurrence alone, and not to a subject who is the persistent bearer of cognitions. There is no persistent self for Buddhists, merely an illusion of it caused by the complex construction of an imaginary entity out of the sequence of fleeting and individual cognitive occurrences.[36] So, in a sense, the ascription is an illusion, to the extent that the cognition is taken to belong to a single, lasting self. But in the narrower sense knowing that the cognition has occurred with such-and-such features, the reflexivity of each particular cognition achieves self-ascription.

Another, separate argument for intrinsic reflexivity is that there are phenomenal states such as pain and happiness which it is like something to be in, and which are not intentional in any case.[37] These are cognitive states, since they have phenomenal character, but they are also reflexive in that one cannot be in that state without awareness of them (*pace* Nyāya philosophers). This already establishes that cognition is auto-luminous or reflexive. Dharmakīrti's claim is that pleasure, pain, and so on, are also cognitive states, intrinsically transparent to their own occurrence, just as intentional cognitions are. But, of course, this is because eventually, intentional cognitions (*citta*) turn out to be entirely self-constituted, just as much as *caitta* states are, since their objects are part of them in the first place, given an idealist metaphysics.[38]

The key consideration in all this is that for cognition to possess self-awareness (*svaseṃvedana*) it must also become aware of itself (*svasaṃvedya*). This is not to say that cognition takes itself as it own object in exactly the manner it takes a constructed (apparently external) object; we have seen Śāntarakṣita rule that out. Rather, reflexivity covers both the act of grasping an object and the phenomenal

35 Williams 1998b, pp. 15–18 forcefully makes this point. A good historical study of this idea is Wood 1991.

36 The modern classic on the origins of this doctrine of the denial of a substantive and persistent self is Collins 1982. On the specific arguments of the Yogācārins, see Ram-Prasad 2001, Ch. 3.

37 Dharmakīrti 1992 I.10 draws a distinction between *citta* – states which take objects, and *caitta* – states which are without object (pleasure and so on), but argues that both are self-aware. Dharmottara in the *Tīkā* on this points out that the *caitta* states are more intense, and without object, but *citta* states are also included in those that are self-aware.; my thanks to Prabal Kumar Sen for allowing me to draw on his unpublished 'A Note on *svasaṃvedana*'.

38 Dharmakīrti 1968, II.250ff. Vīnītadeva 1971, I.9, pp. 10–11, talks of *svarūpaprakāśasvabhāva*, drawing on the familiar intuition of a lamp having to be alight in order to light anything else.

object thus grasped; and this is possible within an idealist metaphysics in which the object is part of the very cognition which takes it as its object.

It should, however, be noted that the Yogācāra theory does not state explicitly that cognition is never its own object. Cognition is aware of itself in a way different from the way it is aware of the cognitively constructed phenomenal object, but nonetheless, the entire phenomenon is a combination of object cognized and cognition of object, within a single state. In a secondary sense, the cognition is indeed its own object in the Yogācāra account of reflexivity: introspection is granted as a cognition that takes another for its object. Although interpreting it differently, both Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas and Advaitins argue that reflexivity must rule out taking the cognition as its own object. We will now look at these in turn.

The Prābhākara svataḥ prakāśa Theory: Reflexivity and the Cognition of a Foundational Self

The developed Prābhākara theory (as presented by Śalikanātha[39]) takes reflexivity within SP as self-ascription of phenomenality.

> Prābhākara hybrid *svataḥ prakāśa* theory (PHSP): The occurrence of a cognition consists in the formation of a three-fold (*tripuṭi*) content constituted by (i) the cognition of its own occurrence, (ii) the cognition of the invariant self which is the subjective bearer of the cognition, and (iii) the intentional object cognized through an appropriate modality. The occurrence of the cognition is therefore also an ascription of it to the subject.

The core contention of the Prābhākara is that the communicable (*vyāvahārika*) expression of a cognition, say of a pot, is 'I cognize a pot'. This, according to him, gives us a true indication of the structure of the cognition: the cognition itself, the self (the 'I') and the object (the pot) are all present. Each cognition is self-ascriptive of its content because each cognition is cognition of (i) its own occurrence, (ii) the subject who has it and (iii) the content-giving object. Without ascription, there would be no distinction between first-person and third-person expression of cognitions, and hence no indication of the phenomenality that triggers first-person usage; 'I cognize this' would be indistinguishable from 'he cognizes this'. Luminosity is therefore to be understood as taking a tripartite (*tripuṭi*) cognitive structure.

The next important claim is that, contrary to what the Naiyāyika says, the verbalization 'I cognize this pot' is not an introspective, second-order cognition of a first order cognition whose content is just 'this pot'. The Prābhākara intuition is that the cognition is structured by the simultaneous occurrence (*sahopalambhaniyama*) of ascription and intentionality: 'I' and 'this' occur together. At the same time, neither of these is possible without a grasp of the cognition of both the self and the object. This means that the occurrence of the cognition itself must be grasped, and this can only be secured through the reflexivity of the cognition.

This account depends on the metaphysically laden notion that ascription (which is meant to deliver reflexivity) happens through the cognition of something called the self (*ātman*). This suggests that the self is an object of cognition. Indeed, the

39 Śalikanātha in Pandurangi 2004.

Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas take the self in this way, as that which is uniquely identified by the name 'I' (*aham*) by those cognitions which belong to it. (They do not link the self intimately with each cognition, as the Prabhākara Mīmāṃsakas do, but the reflective and indirect grasp of a cognition is tantamount to ascription of that cognition to the self who is the subjective bearer of it.) However, in distinguishing themselves from the Bhāṭṭas, the Prābhākaras take recourse in a fine distinction, between the object (*viṣaya*) and the fixed base (*āśraya*) of cognition. Objects are characterized in certain ways: (i) They are the varied and contingent intentional targets of cognition: a pot is perceived now and then, and may never at all be seen by a particular subject. (ii) In all cases, they are perceived through the mediation of some appropriate mode. (iii) The mode of perceiving them also varies: a pot may be touched rather than seen; and things like thunder are only ever heard and not seen. By contrast, the self, as the fixed base of a cognition, is completely different. (i*) The self in a cognition is invariant, and it is impossible for a cognition to function without also being the cognition of the self. That, indeed, is the core claim of the PHSP theory. The occurrence of a cognition is always the occurrence of the cognition of the self. (ii*) The self is not perceived through any mode, not even the mind (which is considered an internal perceptual mechanism whose objects are psychological states); it is directly perceived by the cognition. (iii*) Non-mediated perception is a special linking of cognition and self, suitable and applicable to nothing else.

Points (i*)–(iii*) amount to saying that cognition of the self is the prerequisite of the cognition of objects. So, although the relationship between cognition and self has the structure of intentionality (since cognition is 'about' or 'of' the self), nevertheless, because of its invariance, immediacy and necessary enabling priority, the self is not an object; it is the fixed base which renders cognition of objects possible.

If, then, a cognition is properly to be analysed in terms of the verbalization, 'I cognize this', then the presence of the 'I' element is explained, on the Prābhākara account, through the self being part of the cognitive occurrence as its immediately perceived base. On this account, reflexivity is secured through self-ascription. Of course, apart from the theory of self involved, there is also the notion of a type of perception that is not connected through sensory modes, but is non-mediated. Cognition grasps the presence of its subject directly, without the use of any modes. But a classical Indian critic of this notion, for example, the Naiyāyika, cannot really object too much about this, given Nyāya's own acceptance of a category of extraordinary perceptual contact (*alaukikasaṃnikarṣa*) that does not have sensory modality. In any case, this takes us into the issue of the definition of perception, which we cannot enter into here.

But having striven to account for ascription through the idea that the self is cognized within cognition, the PHSP theory faces a deeper question: how is cognition reflexive with regard to itself (rather than just cognition **of** its self)? The Prābhākara says that the cognition's cognitivity is identical (*tādātmya*) with itself.[40] When a cognition functions to grasp something else, it cannot but grasp its own occurrence. Its own occurrence is as much part of its content as the self and the object. Otherwise, cognition would be inert (*jaḍa*) to itself. This seems to suggest

40 Pandurangi 2004, p. 144.

that cognition functions on itself; and while that is true in a certain way, it is not the same as any other function. For all other functions, which are forms of activity (*kāraka*), it is incoherent to suppose that agency (*kartṛtva*) and action (*karmatva*) are identical: the fingertip, which touches things, does not touch itself. But cognitivity (*jñāpaka*) is not activity.[41] It is misleading to model cognition on action and arrive at the conclusion that cognition cognizing itself is like cognition acting on itself in some way.

SP theories have to explain how cognition and its functioning upon itself are supposed to be identical. (We will see the Advaitin Śrī Harṣa attempting to do this through the concept of an intrinsic (or strictly speaking: auto-aspectual) relationship (*svarūpasaṃbandha*), a logical notion that is endorsed by Naiyāyikas too, and therefore singularly apt for the purpose of being used to defend the concept of auto-luminosity, which they reject.) The purpose of this idea is, of course, to avoid the infinite regress of requiring ever higher-order cognitions to cognize lower-order ones.

But now the PHSP theory has the problem that it has given two different forms of reflexivity. One is the reflexivity that comes of cognition always having grasp of its subject self as its base; this has the advantage of appealing to the linguistic intuition that a cognition is in the ascriptive form of 'I cognize this'. The other is the more fundamental reflexivity of cognition being of itself. The former type of reflexivity clearly depends on the latter, since the Prābhākaras maintain that cognition must first grasp itself to grasp the self. Gaṅgeśa unhelpfully suggests to the Prābhākaras that they could scale down the three-fold structure to a two-fold one, after he has represented his opponent as acknowledging that the fundamental concern of the Prābhākara is actually to defend the intrinsic reflexivity of cognition (its *tādātmya* or identity with its own functionality) and not seek to show that reflexivity is also cognition's grasp of the subject self.[42]

Granting that the PHSP has to come up with an effective account of the intrinsic reflexivity of cognition, we can now note the way in which it is a hybrid theory.

In keeping with their strong realist commitments, the Prābhākaras maintain not only that objects are independent of cognition, but that cognition is strictly dependent on objects. That is why they propound the theory that there is no cognitive error (*akhyātivāda*). If a cognition occurs, it must be of an object, and in cases such as a person taking a real rope to be a snake, there is actually no perceptual state with snake-content, since there is no snake there to be perceived. Rather, an higher-order cognition applies the concept of snake to the rope-object in a purely linguistic judgement that misnames the original (and infallibly veridical) cognition of the real rope as a cognition of a snake. Given this strong realism, they cannot but take cognition to be intentional. That intentionality is, of course, delivered through the object necessarily being part of the content of cognition.

But they also feel that phenomenality is not attained through intentionality alone. Indeed, intentionality is so deeply presupposed because of their strict realism that they only argue for it in the context of their rejection of the Yogācāra idealist

41 Ibid., p. 156.

42 Phillips and Tatacharya 2004, p. 592.

conflation of subject and object.[43] It is integral to their attempts to claim reflexivity. But presupposing that cognition is intentional, they seek to secure its reflexivity too. In gaining cognition of an object, the subject is aware that the cognition has occurred. There is reflexivity here, but it is awareness that a cognition has occurred only through that cognition's intentional content. A cognition needs to be of an object in order for the subject of that cognition to be aware that it has that cognition. The Prābhākara hybrid SP theorist does not allow for the possibility of any sort of reflexivity without intentional cognition. All cognition is intentional, which is why the self-awareness of a cognition is not an intentional state but rather an intrinsic awareness of there being an intentional cognition.

The Prābhākara view is that luminosity – the phenomenal undergoing of experience – comes through the combination of (i) intentionality, (ii) an intrinsic reflexivity of cognition, and (iii) a secondary reflexivity in which the cognition of the object is ascribed to the subject-bearer of that cognition. There is no higher-order cognition here. Rather, a richly realist metaphysics, that involves commitment to the existence of both cognition-forming objects and cognition-bearing subjects, informs an account of first-order cognitivity that is appealing but underdeveloped in its articulation of the nature of the transparency of consciousness to itself. We will now turn to Advaita, where an equally rich if completely different metaphysics directly feeds into a complex and nuanced account of reflexivity. Here, that intuitive idea of the transparency of consciousness to itself is at the heart of the account.

Advaita svataḥ prakāśa: Non-objective Reflexivity and Non-cognitive Intentionality

The Advaitins have the most elaborate theory of consciousness amongst the brahminical schools, because for them the ultimate and irreducible reality is a singular, universal and world-projecting consciousness called *brahman*. This consciousness is all there ultimately is; therefore, any metaphysics of objects must be one in which they can somehow ontologically be assimilated into consciousness. This consciousness is singular and universal, but our experience is of consciousness as restricted to individual loci loosely described as embodied persons; therefore, the nature of the commonality and differences between consciousness as universally de-individuated and as restrictedly individuated must be explicated. The universal consciousness is all there ultimately is while objects are not, but individuated consciousness appears to be of just such objects; therefore consciousness must be existent independently of objects, and yet take them as its content in experience. The demand for this balance determines Advaitic expositions of the nature of luminosity.

> Advaita *svataḥ prakāśa* theory (ASP): The occurrence of cognition consists in cognition of its own occurrence as an independent pre-requisite for cognition of objects. Understood as consciousness that is self-defining or auto-formal cognition (*svarūpajñāna*), cognition is never its own object. But in including cognition of its own occurrence as the intrinsic condition for its occurrence, this pure cognition provides the enabling condition or capacity (*yogyatva*) for the objective content in specific non-cognitive mental states (*vṛtti*) to be cognized, through its conditioned association with the latter, thereby generating specific

43 Pandurangi 2004, pp. 150–6, from Śalikanātha.

cognitive states (*vṛttijñāna*). Ascription of cognition to its subject occurs through another association of cognition with an 'I'-form (*ahaṃkāra*) that is unique to the mental states found within one subjective locus.

As with Yogācāra, because there is such a radical metaphysics and gnoseology behind discussions of consciousness in Advaita, it requires some care to keep to the topic on hand without engaging in a consideration of Advaita as a whole system.

When Advaitins talk of consciousness in its most fundamental sense, they mean actually that which is the nature of the universal consciousness, *brahman*. But fortunately, this is still relevant to human consciousness because of the Advaitic contention that that fundamental consciousness is also found in the locus of the human subject. So we can now concentrate on the Advaitic account of the deepest level of consciousness in a sense accessible to those who are not committed to Advaitic metaphysics. In this fundamental sense, consciousness is auto-luminous: it is reflexive in a way that constitutes its very existence. Advaita is able to develop a carefully nuanced definition of this reflexivity that is interestingly different from Yogācāra and also more refined that Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā, although it shares many features with them, especially the latter.

Advaita holds that the defining characteristic of consciousness is reflexivity; consciousness is auto-luminous. Indeed, only consciousness is reflexive in this intrinsic way. The key Advaitic definition of reflexivity is due to Citsukha and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. They seek to define and defend a conception of self-cognizing cognition which is not just an incoherent claim that cognition is simultaneously both subject and object. At the same time, they want to unpack the notion that cognition and its cognitivity are identical in some way – a concept that we saw Śalikanātha attempting to present for the PHSP theory.

The Advaitic assertion that cognition is intrinsically self-established (*svataḥ siddhasvarūpa*) draws the critical attention of Naiyāyikas, and Śrī Harṣa leads the way for his successors Citsukha and Madhusūdana to follow in defending it.[44] His first point is that reflexivity is established by the infallibility of access to the occurrence of cognition, which he describes as the total of three absences – (i) the absence of doubt over whether one is cognizing or not; (ii) the absence of an erroneous cognition that one has not cognized at all when, in fact, one has done so; and (iii) the absence of even a valid cognition that one has not cognized a thing, when no cognition has occurred at all in the first place.

For the Advaitin, there is no intentional content in the initial reflexivity of consciousness. In contrast, for the YSP theory, reflexivity is an epistemic state, where consciousness takes itself as its constitutive object. The Yogācārins can make this claim because of their idealist notion that objects are constructs within cognition. Śrī Harṣa, like most Advaitins, does not want to deny objectivity outright.[45] In other words, he cannot explicitly assimilate an account of objects into cognitive construction; instead, he must grant that objects should be assumed (although only assumed) to exist separately from cognition in order that the ordinary features of

44 Śrī Harṣa 1948 Vol II, p. 122ff.

45 Ram-Prasad 2002a, on Advaitic non-realism, especially Śrī Harṣa in Section III.

cognition can be explained. So, the Advaitin cannot reject the subject–object duality as merely apparent. He must find some other way of acknowledging the subject–object distinction in phenomenology. No argument will do which takes intentional objects merely as part of cognition, and therefore reflexivity and intentionality as only two sides of the same cognitive coin, as in the YSP theory. That means the pure reflexivity cannot be tied to an idealist metaphysics.

At the same time, while the PHSP theory does claim that cognition is reflexive, the Advaitin is not entirely satisfied with it either, for two reasons. One is the deeper metaphysical point that the Prābhākara is a robust realist about objects, clearly asserting that cognition is dependent on objects for its very occurrence. Even though cognition is supposed to be reflexive, its reflexivity is constitutively correlated with intentionality (hence its hybridity, as we saw earlier). The Advaitin grants only a provisional reality to objects, and certainly does not want to be committed to saying that cognition is dependent on objects. The other reason has to do with the definitional worry that the Prābhākara might not be able satisfactorily to avoid the charge that his theory of reflexivity incoherently claims that cognition is subject and object at the same time.

Śrī Harṣa tries to find a different way through to an account of reflexivity that does not deny the subject–object duality in experience outright but is logically coherent. He considers a sharp Nyāya objection: is reflexivity compatible with the implication that if there is a subject of consciousness, there must be correlative 'objects' of consciousness?[46] The force of this query is best brought out by remembering that the subject in Sanskrit is called the *viṣayin*: 'that which is related to an object', an 'objectee' or that which is 'objectward'.[47] Cognition must have a relationship with objects. If the objects are real and distinct from cognition, that is only to say that cognition is intentional. But if cognition is reflexive, that can only mean that cognition has a relationship with itself as its object, and that is incoherent, since a thing cannot be its own subject and object. There is no way out for any SP theory.

This argument is put by the PP theorist on the basis of the realist metaphysical consideration that the occurrence of consciousness is constituted by a distinction between two reals, the subject and the object. Śrī Harṣa cannot outright deny that there are objects; he requires Advaita to have an elaborate metaphysics in which objects are assumed for the purpose of explaining the nature of experience (even if only to be denied any ultimate proof of existence). Unlike the Yogācārin, he cannot deny that there are objects. What he can do is argue that if cognition does have a relationship with itself, it is nothing like the intentional relationship with real and distinct objects that the Naiyāyika is talking about.

Śrī Harṣa sets out to show that there is actually a kind of relationship – granted in Nyāya logic itself – in which there need be no difference between the relata; the difference can be purely nominal. This is the auto-formal connection (*svarūpasaṃbandha*) which we have already encountered in the NPP theory as the basis of the claim that cognition is constituted naturally by intentionality. In other relationships, if *aRb*, then *a* and *b* are distinct and different reals, and something of

46 Ibid., pp. 168–70.

47 Arindam Chakrabarti's term in unpublished work.

their nature is defined through that relationship. This is the case with, for example, the relationship of mother and daughter. But an auto-formal connection can be read differently, and Śrī Harṣa does so: the natural or constitutive feature of *a* is defined through a relationship in which there is no other, distinct relatum involved. A common example given by Nyāya itself is the relationship between the ground and the absence of a pot on it. The potlessness of the ground is a structural feature of reality captured in the cognition, 'there is no pot on the ground'. Yet there is nothing other than the ground, although a relationship nevertheless exists reflexively as an intrinsic feature of the ground, automatically realized – without any ontological addition – in our cognition of it as not having a pot on it.[48] Where Nyāya uses the auto-formal connection to argue for intentionality being the constitutive feature of cognition, Śrī Harṣa turns it around to say that it is the relationship of cognition to itself; and therefore, more properly, logical support for cognition's reflexivity rather than its intentionality. Cognition may be said to relate to itself in just this way: we can apprehend that a relationship is possible of cognition with itself without seeing two distinct entities involved.

We can understand this argument in the following manner. Subjectivity implies a special sort of intentionality. Note that this is not the same as the view, which Advaita denies, that consciousness is the object of itself. Rather, the claim is that reflexivity is a relationship that logically meets the need for it to be subjective. To be a subject may be to possess intentionality, in the sense of have something, **of** which it is the subject; but such intentionality is, according to Śrī Harṣa, simply built into the very nature of reflexivity. To be reflexive is for cognition to possess a special relationship with itself. If cognition requires a relationship (between subject and object) and reflexivity is a relationship too, then it discharges the requirement that a subject should have it. But it does so in a way that does not give in to the PP demand of a subject–object distinction, since this is a relationship that holds just between a subject and itself, and therefore implies no ontologically significant duality.

Interestingly, Śrī Harṣa mentions the PHSP theory too, not refuting it but merely noting that it is not the Advaitin's position. The hybrid SP of the Prābhākara position seeks to avoid the PP charge that reflexivity cannot secure what intentionality does: namely, a constitutive relationship between cognition and object that secures subjectivity by definition. He recognizes that the Prabhākara theory secures reflexivity via an intentional act: the cognition primarily relates to its object, but to do so, it must have atomic elements of reference to the cognition itself (and, he should add, the self).[49] Jha draws on the example given in this context: the phrase 'long ears' (*lambakarṅa*) refers to a donkey, but the phrase itself depends on secondary reference to its component elements, 'long' and 'ears'.[50] But Śrī Harṣa is

48 The relevance of this line of argument in taking on a Naiyāyika is indicated by the fact that Raghunātha, the Nyāya philosopher who wrote a commentary on the *Khanḍanakhanḍakhādhya*, appears persuaded by it; Raghunātha 1948, pp. 168–70. Suryanarayana Sukla in his commentary *Khanḍanaratnamālika* to Śri Harṣa 1948, clarifies the nature of the relationship involved, as too Jha 1986, fn. p. 37.

49 Ibid., pp. 174–5.

50 Jha 1986, fn. p. 38.

quick to point out that this theory only works for someone for whom the intrinsic establishment of the occurrence of cognition requires cognition to necessarily have objects, while the Advaitin wants a theory of reflexivity that is without any reliance on the intentionality of cognition.

The Advaitins were therefore always aware that they had to clarify the nature of reflexivity as the constitutive characteristic of consciousness without lapsing into logical incoherence. The threat of incoherence always came from the charge that reflexivity was cognition taking itself as its own object. It is in Citsukha's celebrated opening passage of the *Tattvapradīpikā* that we find a concerted attempt to present a proper definition of auto-luminosity:[51] It (i) is not known (not being an object); (ii) is the enabling condition for the functioning of consciousness; and (iii) secures an immediacy between consciousness and its functionality.

The denial of the objectivity of cognition is, of course, the basic feature of reflexivity for Advaita. This is to make clear that the transparency of consciousness to its own occurrence, which distinguishes it from all other – non-conscious or inert – things, does not consist in its taking itself as object. Citsukha is so emphatic about the non-objectivity of consciousness (*jñānāviṣayata*) that he rereads it in the manner inaugurated by Śaṅkara, as unknowable (*avedyatva*). The idea is that only objects can be known: they are distinct from cognition of it, they can vary in their relationship with cognition, and can be grasped by it through the standard epistemic instruments (the *pramāṇa*s): perception, inference, testimony and analytic presumption. This also allows for falsifiability (*bādhakatva* – literally, sublatability of an erroneous cognition by a valid one); a judgement can be generated by a cognition that is erroneous with regard to the way things are, and require another cognition to generate a correct one. Only through the use of these instruments can a valid cognition (*pramā*) result. Thus are objects knowable (*vedyatva*). But consciousness is not knowable in this way, since it cannot take itself as its own object.

Citsukha also offers other elements to the definition: reflexivity is the enabling condition for (consciousness's) functionality (*svavyavahārahetutva*), and it is a matter of having the capacity (*yogyatva*) to function immediately (*aparokṣa*), that is, without the use of the senses.

Citsukha is trying to show how, despite its non-objective nature, consciousness is nevertheless undeniably present. Its reflexivity is what allows it to do what it does, namely, become aware of things. Here, since it is difficult to see what the functioning of consciousness could be apart from taking intentional objects, he appears to be saying that reflexivity permits consciousness to be intentional. But we will see that matters are more complex than that for the Advaitin, since he does not wish to say that consciousness is intentional as such.

There is also the further claim that the relationship of consciousness with its function (assuming that function to be intentional activity) is immediate: there is no mechanism that links consciousness to its (again, presumably) intentional states. These two elements of the definition show that even if reflexivity is the primary characteristic of consciousness, the Advaitin is still concerned to say that this elusive

51 Citsukha 1956, pp. 4–5.

auto-luminosity is entirely consistent with what consciousness is supposed to be about, that is, its objects.

The rigorously negative definition of reflexivity, with its epistemic twist, which is contained in the first element of Citsukha's definition, is meant to rebut the criticism that the Advaitic theory takes one thing as subject and object at the same time. Citsukha leaves behind the more conservative attempt by Śrī Harṣa to explain reflexivity through the Nyāya concept of an auto-formal connection, and instead holds that the fundamental feature of consciousness is nothing to do with any sort of relationship. The luminosity of consciousness in no way contains a covert intentionality with regard to itself. Reflexivity cannot be understood through any terms which imply a duality of consciousness with itself – not even logically, let alone metaphysically.

This attempt to dramatically cut loose consciousness from intentionality always puzzled opponents, even as it appeals to the intuition that there is something unique about the reflexivity of consciousness that cannot be captured by analysis. The claim that reflexivity consists in non-objectivity draws the objection that, quite simply, to even maintain that consciousness is reflexive is already to make a knowledge-claim about it – thereby indicating that it is an object after all, towards which epistemic activity can be directed. Madhusūdana recognizes this objection and responds as follows.[52] Consciousness has already been defined as that which is conscious of (epistemically accessible) objects. In effect, this is to say that whatever is known is not consciousness. The Advaitin's stipulation on the nature of consciousness is such that what is known is always non-conscious, that is, objects. This is the old idea that consciousness is always what is aware of things, and never the thing itself; it cannot touch itself, after all. So, what of the objection that something is known about consciousness when it is said to be reflexive? Madhusūdana's answer is that, in the statement that consciousness is not an object and is not knowable, what is known is not consciousness, but the empirical usage regarding consciousness. Something objective is indeed captured – namely, the theoretical claim enunciated by Advaitins. Yet we are aware that this claim has been stated (and debated) – and **that** awareness is consciousness. With this move, Advaitins point to the necessary elusiveness of consciousness – by 'consciousness' they always mean to indicate the occurrence of phenomenology and never the phenomena. This is the closest that intuition can take us to auto-luminosity.

Opponents of the ASP theory try a different and more technical objection. Drawing on the traditional Indian realist idea, they assert that anything that exists can be known. (The Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas would probably allow for uncognizable existents, but the Naiyāyikas, and the Madhva Vedāntins who are Madhusūdana's opponents here, accept that anything that exists is capable of being known.) They define the existent (and therefore the knowable (*vedyatva*)) as the logical counterpositive (*pratiyogin*) of absolute absence (*atyantābhāva*). The counterpositive is, broadly, an entity defined by being that which contradicts its absence. The idea of defining things as dependent on contradicting their absence is driven by the consideration that the absence of a pot on a table, for example, is epistemically distinct from the

52 Madhusūdana 2005, p. 768.

absence of a stick. (A judgement made and an action undertaken on the basis of a cognition that there is no pot on the table will be very different from judgement and action relating to a cognition that there is no stick on the table.) Now the absence of a pot on a table can be an absence indexed in different ways: a pot yet to be made is absent in a different way from one that has been destroyed; both are different from one that has temporarily been removed from the table; and yet again, there is the mutual absence of the pot and the table in each other. Of all the types of absences in this logic of metaphysical realism, the most general is 'absolute absence', an absence in all spatiotemporal indices, a perpetual absence in conceptual contexts (which is the closest Indian metaphysics comes to the idea of necessity). The counterpositive of that absolute absence, of course, is all that is not absent: anything that is existent is a counterpositive defined by its not being absolutely absent. The opponent's argument is that, since Advaitins could not say that consciousness was absolutely absent, they would have to concede that it was the counterpositive of such absence. But – and here is the sting – to be a counterpositive of absolute absence is to be existent, and to be existent is to be an object. And since objects are knowable, so must consciousness.

Madhusūdana's answer reiterates the Advaitic claim that there are two different orders of being.[53] One is the world of objects, which are real only in so far as they are provisionally to be posited to explain the features of our cognition of them but which are not real independently of any reference to such cognition; they could be called sub-real (*mithyā*). The world is indeed existent in that it is the counterpositive of absolute absence, since it is experienced and is to be explained. And the objects of that world are knowable through the mediation of the epistemic instruments of our cognitive apparatus. But there is a different order of being: consciousness. Its functional presence is not mediated through any apparatus, and it is therefore not known in any objective sense. That is precisely to say that it is not known at all, since knowledge, by the consensus definition of the *pramāṇa*s, is the result of a cognitive process validated by the epistemic instruments, and can only possible be of objects, objects alone being targets of cognition. Consciousness is linguistically available to us in that it can be spoken of with respect to its functions. But it is not the object of itself.

This Advaitic conception of consciousness as essentially reflexive in fact is tantamount to saying that it is purely reflexive. Indeed, this is the idea behind the conception of such consciousness as 'witness' (*sākṣin*, drawing on the word for sight that suggests the literal translation 'onlooker'). Just as onlookers do not engage in the events they are witnessing, so witness-consciousness does not engage with objects. It is present, but is transparent to content, not itself intentionally directed towards (i.e. 'engaged' with) objects.[54]

But this opens up the question of phenomenality. For the PP schools, reflexivity is the issue of how to secure awareness of intentional objects, but with ASP, it is the other way around: reflexivity is defined so strictly that there seems to be no

53 Ibid., p. 772.

54 See Chatterjea 2002 for an interesting if terminologically loose exploration of this concept.

possibility of awareness being of objects at all. So, the challenge for ASP is to explain the intentional side of experience. It is all very well to say that consciousness is intrinsically an aware of its occurrence, but – to use the old metaphor – if it can only light itself what is the point? How does it light things? In short, what can the Advaitin say about the fact that our philosophical problem is with our consciousness being consciousness of something or the other? If consciousness is essentially transparency without reference to content, how is content achieved? It may be a logical feature of consciousness that it requires nothing else; but to undergo consciousness normally is to be conscious of something. The phenomenality of consciousness clearly consists in its being about objects of various sorts. So how does this transparent consciousness nonetheless secure intentionality, in order to give cognition of objects its phenomenal feel?

Here, ASP provides an astonishingly reductive account of intentionality, in terms of the concept of a mental state (*vṛtti*) that is not intrinsically cognitive – that is, luminous – at all! The Advaitins use the word 'cognition' (*jñāna*) to distinguish between two different things. One is consciousness, which is auto-formal cognition (*svarūpajñāna*): it defines itself through its very being, its presence transparent to its own capacity to detect anything else that is present. This is cognition without reference to objects. The other is cognition that is somehow associated with non-cognitive states whose content is determined by objects; it is then called a cognitive state (*vṛttijñāna*). What we have seen is the argument that cognition *simpliciter*, that is, cognition whose nature is defined by itself, is reflexive. It is through association with non-cognitive states that cognition becomes intentional and generates the phenomenality in question. We have, then, two elements to intentionality: non-cognitive states, and the association of pure consciousness with these states in order to generate a viable phenomenology.

The Advaitins talk of the mind (*manas*) as an inner functional mechanism (*antaḥkaraṇa*). It is no more intrinsically conscious than the sense organs. Of course, without any neuroscientific knowledge, they did not have any idea how this 'inner organ' worked (they did not know how vision worked either, of course, but at least they could identify the relevant macro-structures of the eye). But in effect, they were unknowingly getting at the idea of the brain, as an instrument in which informational or objective content (*viṣayatva*) could be located. On their account, the functioning of the mind generates a state which is a configuration of non-cognitive sensing apparatus by the structural features of the object. As Dharmarāja puts it, the form (*ākāra*) of the mind is shaped (*parinamate*) by the object: the result is a mental state.[55] The mind goes out to the object. The content of this state is given by its object; and states are co-variant with objects. A description of each state is actually a description of its object.[56] There is no question but that mental states are intentional; indeed, intentionality constitutes their nature. (Note that they may or may not be

55 Dharmarāja 1942, I.18, p. 13.

56 Although we cannot do it here, it would be interesting to explore the issue of whether this suggests an externalist account of mental content in Advaita (albeit within a metaphysics in which the ontological status of objects is more complex than in the realism assumed in contemporary Western philosophy of mind).

representational, given that there is the question in classical Indian thought about whether or not every state is conceptual or whether there can be non-conceptual – and therefore non-representational – sensory input.) However, these states are non-phenomenal, since the content of a mental state can be exhaustively noted through the mere description of the object and the mode of its sensory reception. This strikingly physicalist account is obviously quite inappropriate for the larger commitment to consciousness of the Advaitins. They must relate the two sides of their account: the purely reflexive and the non-cognitively intentional.

Advaitins do this through the notion that consciousness – formally reflexive cognition – is determined (*avacchinna*) or delimited (*upahita*)[57] by the non-cognitive mental states, somehow bringing reflexivity and intentionality together. Consciousness cannot be intentional towards non-cognitive states, any more than it can be towards objects, for once the principle of conscious intentionality is granted, the rigorous definition of consciousness as reflexive cannot be maintained. So Advaitins argue that the relationship between consciousness and mental states is an immediate one, an infallible accessibility of the content of mental states to consciousness. Thus is subjectivity generated.

The hoary Advaitic idea behind this delimitation of reflexive consciousness is the 'superimposition' (*adhyāsa*) of the mental state, whose content is the object, on consciousness. The objective information attained by the mental function is superimposed on transparent consciousness. Consciousness (primary cognition) individuated according to some specific item in mental functioning (some item of information about the object), becomes a cognitive state. Since the non-cognitive mental function is about an object, its association with constitutively reflexive cognition allows that cognition to secure intentionality.

According to the Advaitins, this is the only possible relationship between subject and object (thereby denying any ontologically real relationship). But such imposition can be interpreted as functioning to secure intentionality (the object that is 'imposed' is the object towards which cognition is directed). Intentionality is secured through a non-cognitive function which is then superimposed on a purely reflexive consciousness. This consciousness is able to relate to itself through its natural auto-formality. What is put in – superimposed on – the transparency of consciousness is also transparent to consciousness. This is how phenomenality is explained. The paradox is that phenomenality is always – in our ordinary life – consciousness of something, but the analysis indicates that for consciousness to be consciousness of something, it must possess the nature of being conscious independently of anything it is conscious of.

The Advaitic account is transcendental in two senses. In the Kantian sense of an argument about what must be the case for experience to be the way it is, it is transcendental because it claims that only if consciousness were intrinsically reflexive could there be consciousness of anything. Phenomenality – consciousness of things – requires consciousness to possess the nature of being conscious per se. It is also transcendental in the metaphysical sense that it maintains that consciousness

57 Ibid., I.51, p. 24.

ultimately is 'pure', that is, without phenomenal content; for that is the consciousness of *brahman*, in which no object irreducibly exists.[58]

Of course, the core mystery still remains. Superimposition is a formal explanation, but the mechanism for it is entirely unclear. We are told that consciousness takes the form of cognitive states by its association with non-cognitive intentional states. An oft-repeated analogy talks of the way in which a transparent glass takes on a reddish tinge if a red flower is placed behind it. But we want to know more. Yet, if it is successful as an explanation at all, it is useful in suggesting that there are three components to phenomenology: (i) the pure phenomenal capacity of reflexive consciousness; (ii) the non-cognitive mental states that allow for intentionality, ascription and epistemology; and (iii) the formal relationship of superimposition to explain how the apparently contrasting demands of reflexivity and intentionality are met.

Intentionality, Introspection and the Problem of Regress

I have tried to articulate the debate and the different theories in such a way as to provide as powerful a version of each theory as possible. However, one task remains. We have seen how SP theories, while insisting that the primary characteristic of consciousness is reflexivity, also seek to secure intentionality in some way. No account of luminosity could work without attending to the double intuition about phenomenology: consciousness is of something, and consciousness is transparent to itself.

We have seen how the SP theories have led with the latter intuition, while attempting to accommodate the former in some way. In YSP, reflexivity characterizes consciousness, but with objects themselves metaphysically part of consciousness, the reflexive act is also an intentional one. In PHSP, reflexivity does characterize consciousness, but cognitions exist and have identity only because they are intentional. In both cases, then, reflexivity and intentionality are simultaneous, although for Yogācāra, purely reflexive consciousness remains a possibility to be realized in liberation, while for Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā reflexivity invariably depends on intentionality. ASP is the most extreme assertion of reflexivity, because consciousness is defined purely in that way; the Advaitins, then, have to secure intentionality through a non-cognitive function that structures individual cognitions, thereby allowing consciousness to have access to intentional content.

What is not always evident from calling all these *svataḥ prakāśa* theories is that reflexivity is interpreted in a different way in each of them. In YSP, a cognition is actually an occurrent composed of two parts, the subjective and the objective; so, reflexivity is the action of one thing upon another (and therefore not logically incoherent) and yet an action upon itself because of the idealist metaphysical construal of objects as cognitive constructs. Reflexivity is therefore the access of cognition to its own internal content. In PHSP, reflexivity is both a capacity to ascribe the cognition to a unique bearer (the self) as well as the capacity to relate to itself in some way. (Whether that relationship is an incoherent action upon itself or some

58 Ram-Prasad 2001, Ch. 4 explores some aspects of this argument.

coherent identity of thing and action is unclear.) In ASP, reflexivity is a rigorously defined necessary non-objectivity (and if a relationship at all, then a special one in which there is only one real relatum, and the duality of logically required relata is purely nominal).

The late developments in Advaita (12th to 17th century, from Śrī Harṣa to Dharmarāja) allow it to draw up this notion of reflexivity, which is some distance from our pre-philosophical intuition than reflexivity is primarily about ascription of cognition to and by its bearer. Advaita in fact explains ascription – '*I* see a pot' – through its complex metaphysics of mind, in which 'I' is seen as another function, a logical one, attached to the mind or internal organ. On this account, the 'I' is another non-cognitive element by which cognition is structured, and ascription a secondary result of the association of reflexive cognition with non-cognitive mental functions. It is fascinating in itself, but because it does not affect the strict reflexivity of consciousness asserted in the developed Advaitic view, I have not dealt with it in detail here. Suffice it to say that ascription to a bearer of cognition is not part of the core Advaitic notion of reflexivity. But the other schools, all of which played a role in the earlier debates (6th to 9th century) think of ascription as the signature of reflexivity. Yogācāra, of course, deconstructs both subject and object into fleeting cognitive moments, and in doing so, reads ascription as the allocation of an illusory object to an equally illusory subject within the flow of cognitions. The appeal of this account is always tied to the plausibility of its metaphysics. Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā is explicit in reading reflexivity as ascription: the cognitive moment is the combination of cognitive act, self and object.

In very different ways, YSP and ASP take all conscious states, if they are to be understood as ascriptive at all, as ascriptive in a minimal way, in that each cognition is transparent to itself. The ascription is not any richer, in that the subject is not taken to have knowledge of its personal identity (not just 'Ram-Prasad' but even 'this separate person, here'.) On this minimalist account of ascription, there is no problem with subconscious states, unevoked memories, dispositions, and so on. SP can treat them as tacit states of awareness which, when intensified quantitatively, result in explicitly ascribed content to the constructed identity of the person: in Yogācāra this is through the synthesis of fleeting cognitive moments into the illusion of a continuous person, and in Advaita it is through the structured association of consciousness with the 'I'-form which is a function of the mind. The demands of their metaphysical revisionism of selfhood allow both these schools to think of ascription very narrowly as access of consciousness to itself. The conventional idea of the self as a persistent and continuous bearer of all physically contiguous cognitive states demands a richer notion of ascription. The Naiyāyikas and Mīmāṃsakas, who do have this more conservative view of the self, consequently do consider ascription as pertaining to a persistent and continuously accessible self.

It is true that this richer notion of ascription is the most intuitive way of reading reflexivity: our awareness of being aware looks to be a capacity to say of – and to – ourselves that we are aware; and the 'we' refers to selves conceived as individual, embodied subjects with a limited locus of consciousness. In this regard, the PHSP theory – for all that it has a baroque architectonic – seeks to remain close to that intuition. This is true of the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā theory as well. The BPP is strictly

intentional, and looks on intentionality as required for robust Mīmāṃsā realism. Cognition can occur only by being of independent objects: no objects, no cognition. So the nature of cognition is given by its being about objects. But are we not aware of the things we see or touch? In answer to that, the BPP takes recourse in a higher-order theory, in which an epistemic process (either analytically presumptive or empirically inferential) intentionally directed at the original object delivers to the persistent subject an indirect conclusion about the occurrence of a cognition to the agent of the epistemic process. In other words, the subject comes to know, in the second-order state, that a first-order cognition of an object has occurred. It would seem that (although Kumārila is not clear about this) the first-order cognition is invariably followed by this thought. The BPP theory obviously acknowledges the appeal of the intuition that there is something reflexive about consciousness and that that reflexivity takes the form of a self-ascription. Although the self is not explicitly built into the ascription as it is in PHSP, the BPP nonetheless agrees to explain the access of cognition to itself through the idea of an indirect second-order cognition which discloses the relationship of the original cognition with its subject; after all, it is this subject which notices its own perceptual contact with an object and thereby concludes that it must therefore have had a cognition.

It is in the context of this historical consensus over the richly ascriptive nature of reflexivity that one must read the Nyāya theory. As we have seen, the earlier formulation of NPP risks regress by granting that the first-order cognition becomes an internal perceptual object of another cognition. The Naiyāyikas appear to have acknowledged the need to explain the self-access of cognition and offered introspection as the means to secure this. The initial division between the original cognition and the introspective one seemed to be a division of labour: the initial cognition is intentional towards the object, as it should be in any realist metaphysics, and the introspection allows the subject to become reflexively aware of the first one, by taking that as the object of the second cognition. Put this way, the obvious objection is that the second-order cognition – which apparently is required to complete the phenomenological circle – in turn requires another to take it as its object, and so on infinitely. The early Nyāya response that, as a matter of fact, we stop with a few orders of introspection entirely misses the point. The objection is not to be met with an empirical appeal to psychology. It seems as if Nyāya never adequately refutes this charge.[59]

Rich ascription to a subject self is extrinsic, contingent and requires a second-order cognition that takes the first as its object. But, in fact, ascription in PP does not actually do the job of securing reflexivity; and it took some while for Nyāya to make this clear, and thereby avoid the charge of infinite regress. Introspection for NPP is not reflexive (according to them, no awareness is); the contingent second-order awareness is, indeed, ascriptive but it is not reflexive. Later Nyāya appears to succeed in clarifying that introspection (which is merely an higher-order cognition of the same sort as the first-order one) is not reflexivity, for the latter is never a feature of consciousness at all for Nyāya. There is a sense of intellectual liberation in Gaṅgeśa's assertion that a cognition may never be introspected. He realizes that

59 This is the view of Mohanty 1972, p. 168.

introspection is not relevant at all in the Nyāya search for the defining feature of cognition.[60] Cognition is intentional all the way up! Cognitions can become objects of other cognitions, but that is simply an additional step in the recognition that cognitions always and only take objects. To be a cognition is to be intentional, pure and simple. Intentionality alone delivers phenomenality; that is the real import of the claim for hetero-luminosity. Attempting to allow reflexivity into the definition of luminosity will indeed open NPP to the charge of regress. The charge of regress is disarmed by refusing to countenance any injection of reflexivity into the nature of cognition.[61] In doing this, Gaṅgeśa reads phenomenality in entirely intentional terms, resisting the age-old temptation to provide second-hand reflexivity through ascription, which the earlier Naiyāyikas and all the Mīmāṃsakas had fallen for.

Engaging with Physicalism

Neither Dualism nor (Dualist-denying) Reductionism

There is nothing in Indian thought like the Cartesian duality which combines (i) a metaphysically real external world that the subject is to be conscious of, and (ii) conscious content that is purely 'inner' or narrowly confined to the subject regardless of external variation. In other words, Indian schools do not hold both that objects are external and that the phenomenology of the subject is internal. Either objects are denied externality (directly by Yogācāra-Madhyamaka or indirectly by Advaita) or phenomenology is externalist (for everyone else who grants a real external world).[62] Only in recent times have Western philosophers combined the idea of phenomenology and external content, arguing that the directedness of consciousness is precisely what is phenomenological about it.[63] It would seem that this is taken as read in much of classical Indian thought; the arguments lie over other issues.

In PP-based realisms, the dualism is only between the formal self on the one hand and all consciousness processes through the internal sensory process that is the mind on the other. Consciousness as a property is physicalistically realized, and so can be re-read in contemporary terms. But even if the metaphysical/soteriological concern is bracketed, this is not reductive, although it can be physicalistic. In ASP anti-realism, some form of ultimate monism (indirectly reducing the world to a universal consciousness) prevails; and a physicalism-mimicking provisional realism of mental content is allowed. The anti-physicalism of Indic theories of consciousness lies in the impossibility of reading luminosity in terms of neurophysical states (although

60 Gaṅgeśa in Phillips and Tatacharya 2004, pp. 588–9.

61 Ibid., p. 595. Although he does not use this terminology or comment on the issue in any way similar to me, Phillips's comments on these passages are very helpful.

62 Sautrāntika Buddhism, in which there is an external world, but experience of it is in the form of cognitive construction out of perceptual states, comes closest to the Cartesian divide.

63 A clear formulation of the claim, and arguments in support of it against traditional Western distinctions between content and phenomenology, is found in McCulloch 2002, p. 131ff.

such states can be re-interpreted as the scientific equivalent of the 'inert' or non-cognitive (*jaḍa*) mind (*manas*) or internal organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*) in most non-idealist systems. Since consciousness is essentially phenomenological in classical Indian thought, no kind of ultimate reduction of consciousness to physical states can be carried through.[64] This is still an open question in contemporary philosophy. The key claim against physicalism is that, when an entire and detailed description of mental states is given – say, to a visiting Martian who does not understand how humans work – the phenomenology is still left out. So the transition from the third-person physicalist account to first-person phenomenology is still impossible.[65]

The question of whether the Indian material can make a direct contribution to that particular discussion on the very possibility of physicalist reductionism must wait for another day. Instead, I want to conclude this exploration by asking a different question: can Indian theories of consciousness play any role in the physicalist study of consciousness that currently dominates the field? In a sense, this is not to ask a question of physicalism but of Indian philosophy. It should be clear that, ultimately, no classical Indian theories we have seen can be physicalist. In the context of this book, we can see that the exploration of the defining feature of consciousness is closely tied to the search for liberating knowledge. On the other hand, contemporary discussions are still asking whether consciousness should be understood in a purely physicalist way or not; it is a live issue, and one in which physicalism has delivered on a series of interesting developments in cognitive science. So it is worth asking a hard question of the classical Indian theories: can they be, in any way, interpreted so as to contribute to physicalist discourse as well? Or must they remain confined to anti-physicalist philosophy alone? I want to sketch here some ways in which the Indian theories can be read in a physicalist context. The consequences of knowledge in this case would certainly not be soteriological; but that is the point. A revised Indian philosophy, which lives today and is not purely of antiquarian interest, must be one which offers scope for contemporary debates. Because the only non-brahmanical (or non-Hindu) school I have dealt with is Yogācāra, which cannot countenance any form of physicalism, the following discussion is confined to the Hindu schools discussed so far. I think that Madhyamaka Buddhism in fact offers great scope for creative engagement with contemporary issues.[66]

The situation is thus: classical Indian theories of consciousness generally evolved within a soteriological context in which the ultimate goal was some transcendental spiritual state. Contemporary consciousness studies, apart from where it is approached from the specifically religious concerns of Christianity (and increasingly, Buddhism), is generally oriented to scientific goals that allow no place for transcendental concerns. Of course, it is time the religious dimensions of consciousness are approached from Hindu perspectives as well, to join those of other traditions. But this part of the

64 That luminosity – the what-it's-likeness – of consciousness presents an insuperable problem for physicalist programmes is well put by Levine 1993.

65 Bonjour n.d.

66 The rigorous and sustained analysis in Siderits 2003 on reductionism, addressing Western and Buddhist strategies and issues through the lens of Madhyamaka is the best recent example.

chapter is concerned with the interpretive possibilities of Hindu-derived systems within the non-religious, physicalist paradigm of consciousness studies.

A note on a terminological inexactitude: I have stayed with the conventional but misleading term ‘Hindu’ when initially describing the systems or schools. I take it for granted that the reader will keep in mind the problems associated with that word, and the difficulty of reading it back into the history of Indian philosophy. It would be more accurate to call them ‘brahmanical’, to distinguish them from Buddhist and Jaina systems, since socio-religious circumstances stopped all but brahmin men from having access to the intellectual culture of the philosophical tradition. (It is no accident that Indian Mahāyāna schools, deeply engaged as they were in debates with the brahmanical systems, tended to be represented by brahmin converts.) ‘Hindu’ looks to be a simpler and more readable term for those not primarily concerned with the facts of Indian religio-philosophical history, while ‘brahmanical’ is more accurate. I will use both.

Physicalism and Classical Indian Material: A Challenge

I will take physicalism in the ontological sense, as the thesis that all occurrences and entities are constituted by the (literal, that is, inorganic) material of physics. It can be added that the majority of physicalists also hold the epistemological thesis that all occurrences and entities are constituted by the logical material of physics; that is, can be described and explained by physics. However, some ontological physicalists or materialists reject such reductive (or even eliminative) strategies, and so I shall not take this second conception as part of the basic framework within which I assume the Indian material should work.

Now, as ontological physicalism is widely accepted as true in (non-religious) consciousness studies, it is assumed that whatever consciousness is, it is made up of physical elements and their interactions. (This assumption is common to even many of those who hold that some features of consciousness cannot be (re-)described in the terminology of physics.) It would seem *prima facie* that that leaves no space for classical Hindu concerns about consciousness, in terms of its logico-metaphysical relationship with the self (*ātman*) that is the focus of soteriological endeavour. The goal of the classical philosophy is the attainment of liberation for that self from the flawed conditions of a material existence. The focus of that philosophy is, in other words, something that precisely is not a physical entity, that precisely seeks liberation from the physical (howsoever subtle and sophisticated the accounts of such liberation).

Classical Indian philosophy (and that includes the Buddhist systems that, even though they deny a metaphysical self, nonetheless have the soteriological goal of liberation) then, has concerns that are simply incompatible with the framework of physicalist consciousness studies. On the other hand, it is undeniable, for those who know anything about the classical Indian texts, that there is much in these texts on issues of selfhood, consciousness, self-consciousness, mind, mental activity, and so on, that appear germane to contemporary concerns. What sorts of responses may be given to this situation? There are broadly three:

1. The robust dismissal: the soteriological centrality of the *ātman* cannot be given up; the eternal aims of religion cannot be changed by physicalism. This claim should not be confused with the prejudiced orientalism that rejects the possibility of engagement through the contention that there is nothing in the classical material. It is a largely hypothetical position that holds that the Indian philosophical material is so intrinsically connected to soteriological aims that if, in consequence, it turns out to be incompatible with physicalist-based consciousness studies, then so be it.

2. The interpretative compromise: if the soteriological commitments are incompatible with physicalism, then they could be bracketed, and the actual philosophical discussion of self and consciousness should be studied for what they contribute to physicalism-conditioned contemporary discussions on those topics. This is reasonable, because it allows for historically sensitive study of classical thought to be integrated with more deliberately ahistorical philosophical analysis. The further merit of this strategy, as will become evident in the following pages, is that it reflects the very way in which the philosophical theories of self and consciousness tend to function in the Indian systems. In general, much Indian philosophical discussion in any case proceeds freely in relatively autonomous spaces, engaging in analysis of language, world, knowledge, logic, and the like, once the soteriological motive has been specified. Even in texts directly connected with soteriological issues, the analytic method is evident and therefore retrievable for the interpretative strategy.

3. The re-interpretative solution: the soteriological commitments should be dropped and the available ideas modified to become compatible with physicalism. While few explicitly espouse this strategy, it has in effect been adopted by a range of contemporary writers in Indian and inter-traditional philosophy. The fundamental methodological justification for it is comparativist. The historical development of modern philosophy in the West does not show the hermeneutic rupture that Indian thought suffers. The Western conceptualizations of philosophical activity are unquestioning in their cultural framing; Western philosophy is 'just' philosophy. In that sense, however much it is descended from historically and even textually specific sources, its creative energy can be seen as purely contemporary. Indian philosophy, in contrast, is seen by many Western philosophers and Indologists as lying on the far side of a historical divide. There is no continuity, no evolution into present circumstance that allows the past to recede from the foreground of intellectual concerns. To do Indian philosophy is not to do 'just' philosophy; it must be answerable to historical and textual specificities. This attitude lacks intellectual virtue. It closes, because of contingent historical circumstances, all avenues to a contemporary philosophy that can have its own cultural framing. (And I am not even beginning to think of the possibility of global philosophy ...) The re-interpretative strategy is a strong response to this attitude. It seeks to actualize a contemporary Indian philosophy by choosing to de-historicize the textual specifics. What can be done to Aristotle can be done to Śaṅkara,

> in terms of the freedom one has to create discourse relevant to the present, however different the aetiologies of creative discourse are in the two cases.

Despite that polemical digression, I hope to remain neutral between the second and third strategies when recommending features of certain Indian schools of thought that might be relevant to contemporary physicalism-conditioned consciousness studies.

I will look at what Nyāya, Advaita and the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā schools say about the relationship between the focus of soteriology, the *ātman* or self, and consciousness. After presenting each type of theory, I will suggest the areas in consciousness studies to which each could contribute. In keeping with the programmatic nature of this concluding survey, I will not attempt to say anything about the content of such possible contribution, for each area deserves attention on its own.

The Objective Self and the Body: Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya

For both of these schools, consciousness is a quality of the self. The self is the unified substrate of consciousness, that which provides the continuity of existence available in experience with regard to this life and available in testimony with regard to the cycle of lives. Both are committed to the metaphysical thesis of a unified self, and positions in defence of it tend to rely on two interconnected types of argument. One concerns mental and moral continuities, the most important being memory and consequential agency respectively. The other concerns the requirements for a satisfactory account of the features of cognition, mostly to do with coordination of the modes of perception, and the demonstrative nature of the subject's self-location and the experience of stable external objects. They are interconnected because they rely on the notion of embodied consciousness. This is important because arguments for the soteriologically important self proceed through consideration of the role and manifestations of consciousness, and the purpose of this section is to look at how their views on consciousness may contribute to contemporary consciousness studies.

It would seem from this brief introduction that these two schools ought to suffer precisely from an inability to contribute to physicalist discussions of consciousness, because their views on consciousness relate to that steadfastly non-physicalist entity, the self. But that is not so. My case for their potential contributions has two elements: first, what they both say about the conditions for consciousness; and second, surprisingly, their beliefs about the ultimate soteriological state of liberation as follows from their views on the relationship between self and consciousness.

The key idea about the conditions of consciousness comes down to this: consciousness requires embodiment. Common to the brahmanical (and Jaina) schools (and most Buddhist ones) is the thought that embodiment is a psychophysical complex, including both the gross body and its apparatus, sensory and mental. Crucially, the 'mind' (*manas*) is understood as part of the body complex. All the schools talk of an 'internal organ', which is required to explain the undergoing of such states as pleasure, satisfaction, frustration and the like. These two schools hold this internal organ to be a sixth, perceptual mode, taking its functioning to have the

same physical processes as the familiar perceptual ones. It would seem that most of what is understood as the mind in Western thought coincides with '*manas*'; but not all. To the extent that a stable internal entity that functions as the mode of awareness is 'the mind', it is so in Indian – just as it is in Western – philosophy. Where, clearly, the '*manas*' is not the 'mind' of Western, philosophy, is in the non-physicalist sense, the mind that Descartes thought outlived the body, the mind of mind–body dualism, where it is by definition something independent in its essence from (although contingently found in) the body.

Crucially, the *manas* operates solely as and through bodily process. It is sensory just in that it is defined by embodiment;[67] the unconditioned mind cannot be a sense-organ[68], in Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā; and Nyāya holds much the same thing.[69] All explanation of this mind is of the same order as explanation of perceptual – that is, bodily – states. To that extent, it is not too difficult to present the views of these schools on the *manas* within the context of physicalist discourse. Analyses of its functions are compatible with contemporary discussions about modalities of perception and other cognitive processes that are premised on the physicality of awareness-structuring faculties and processes.

The delicate distinction, however, is the one between the cognitive apparatus, including the mind so defined, and consciousness. The mind may be like the perceptual mechanisms, but it is an instrument of consciousness, which latter is the actual undergoing of processes by, and the illumination of what is happening in and to, the subject. Consciousness is the general phenomenon given content by the functioning of mind and senses. The question is whether the distinction between the psychophysical apparatus (the body) and consciousness creates anything like the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, thereby making the Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya views incompatible with physicalist discourse on consciousness.

The answer is that it does not, for consciousness itself is clearly stated as requiring embodiment. There is simply no functioning of consciousness without body. This tying of consciousness to the body is significant in the potential it provides to these schools for contributing to physicalist discourse on consciousness, as I will argue shortly. But before that, it should be acknowledged that this point is often obscured by the strategies that they adopt when making the metaphysical case for the existence of a unified self. The characteristic defence of a unified self usually involves appeal to the perception or, more generally, the very notion (*vikalpa*) of the self, in the form of the 'I'.[70] Since the self is avowedly spiritual and non-physicalist, the appeal to features of consciousness in the proofs of its existence would seem to make the views of these two schools on consciousness incompatible with physicalist-conditioned discourse.

One must go beyond this impression. In an unexpected way, the very link that these schools make between consciousness and the non-physical self, while allowing

67 Nārāyaṇa *1933, I.ii.5.*

68 Ibid., II.ii.126.

69 cf. Gaṅgeśa 1972/1982, I.12, pp. 827–8.

70 The *locus classicus* in Nyāya is Udayana 1995 section IV, p. 344ff. For the most authoritative early formulation in Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, Kumārila 1978, V.18.125–6ff.

them to use appeal to the former in order to help establish the existence of the latter, also allows talk of the non-physical self (with its ultimate soteriological goal) to be bracketed or dropped. The link is one of qualification: consciousness is a quality possessed by the self, one of functionality (*kriyātva*); and it is quite distinct from the self as such.[71] And that quality is manifested – functions – only when the self is embodied. So, where proofs for the existence of the self take recourse in the material of experience (and most proofs do), they do, of course, appeal to the features of consciousness, for experience is embodied consciousness, and there is no other form of consciousness. This means that, although consciousness is evoked in support of a non-physical entity, it is itself held available only in a physicalist context, namely, embodiment. The features of its occurrence are strictly within the constraints of physicality.

Does that not lead to an insuperable contradiction – between physicalistically conditioned consciousness and the avowedly non-physical self? What is the self, independent of embodiment? Surely this question is important, because, presumably, the self is the concern of soteriology, and soteriology is a matter of freedom from the conditions of embodiment. If consciousness is available only in embodiment and the self is to be freed from embodiment, what happens to the consciousness of the self? The answer is available in their theories of liberation: the self is without consciousness in liberation. (This is to ignore the dramatically inconsistent later Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā writers such as Nārāyaṇa, who take liberation to be a joyful state. I will also ignore the possibility that some sort of cognitivity is implied in some Nyāya characterizations of liberation.) Ultimately, the self is not consciousness.

This is very disorienting from most Western points of view, especially of generally Cartesian Christian philosophy of religion. When the 'soul' of soteriology and the 'mind' of philosophy are run together as non-physical and trans-thanatic, there seems to be some access to an understanding of the substantive nature of the former. (Of course, there can always be purely formal qualities, such as eternality, attributed to the self or the soul by any system.) But there is no hold on the self-in-itself espoused by Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya, for the phenomenal access to it, as that which is conscious, is left behind in liberation. All that we thought we knew of ourselves is asserted to be non-intrinsic to us, if we are intrinsically – and ultimately – the selves of liberation. This is not incoherent, but my concern here in any case is not to explore the religious implications of this disjuncture between ordinary and liberated existence. Instead, I want to point out how this view allows the student of these two schools to come into contemporary physicalist-conditioned debates.

The self is undeniably a non-physical(ist) entity, and arguments using consciousness with the aim of establishing the self and its ultimate state cannot be squared with physicalist consciousness studies. But the belief is that consciousness is a quality of the self not found in liberation. This is to be conjoined with the argument that consciousness itself is available, because functioning, only in embodiment. So all that is and can be said about consciousness is confined to the constraining physical(ist) demands of the body.

71 For example, for Nyāya, Udayana 1995, p. 347.

In sum, the rigorous requirement in these two schools is that consciousness be understood in terms of the broadly physicalist bodily apparatus (including the purely instrumental mind) – evident in the eventual de-linking of consciousness from the ultimate soteriological state of the self – allows their views on, and arguments about, consciousness to contribute to contemporary physicalist-conditioned studies. All actual talk of consciousness is confined to talk of its functioning through the body, and that is consonant with the minimal assumptions of physicalism. This is not to say that either of these schools would necessarily accept anything like modern eliminativism, in which nothing but physical entities are accepted and talked about, or even reductionism, in which mental phenomena are analysed down to physical ones. Acceptance of such doctrines would indeed require a strongly re-interpretative response, in which all soteriological commitments were dropped. The schools can best be seen as holding some sort of non-reductive physicalism. But the resolution of the issue of the constitution of mind and consciousness is not the only aim of consciousness studies. Much that concerns processes, conditions for occurrence, types of functions, and so on, can be studied without addressing the issue of what all this is made up of. And it is in these areas that there can be potential for contributions from Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya.

There are other aspects of the theories of consciousness of these schools that, while saying nothing in themselves about physicalism, also contribute to some contemporary issues in consciousness studies. One of these is the analysis of the nature of the access that a subject has to consciousness that makes it different from, say, access to the functioning of the heart. This accessibility to the content of consciousness is expressed, of course, in the metaphor of luminosity.

For both these schools, the embodied self is the object of its own embodied consciousness. The self is accessible to itself, having both agency and objecthood of consciousness. The intentionality or object-directedness of such consciousness is manifested in the 'I'-form, that is to say, in the use of the first-person as an operation on the bearer of accessible states of consciousness. The self is experienced in the form of 'I know' (*ahaṃ jānāmi*),[72] according to Nyāya. The Bhāṭṭas, too, argue that the cognizing subject is the object of the 'I'-form, since the one who apprehends, apprehends their own self as the 'I'.[73]

This identification of the self as the object picked out by the consciousness of the first-person form offers many interesting philosophical possibilities, but I mention it more to contrast it with the rather more surprising Advaitic denial of this identification, which we shall examine later.

The basic thrust of my presentation of Nyāya and Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā should be clear: their views and arguments on consciousness can be brought to bear on contemporary, physicalist-oriented consciousness studies, because their very soteriology and metaphysics allow the bracketing or excision of non-physicalist concerns. Some of the areas in which they might contribute are suggested below.

To start with, the assertion that there is some object of study – the conscious, embodied self – is itself a useful methodological point. This will be evident in the

72 Ibid.

73 Pārthasārathi Miśra, 1977, p. 251.

contrast with Advaita. The majority of those undertaking the study of consciousness take it be accessible to systematic study. The philosophical issue is whether this is defensible, and Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā think it is. Their arguments in favour of the objectivity of the conscious self – its being a proper focus of knowledge – can contribute to the large and primary issue of what consciousness studies should be able to do.

In more specific areas of study, their arguments for the role of the bodily complex in providing self-identity are worth studying. Here again, the soteriological motive, at first a block on re-interpretative study, turns out not to be so. There is no denying that the classical philosophers hold the identification of the self with the bodily complex to be a grievous spiritual error. They assume that the natural (*naisargika*) notion of the self – as the embodied individual – is wrong (*atattva*).[74] However, precisely because of this conviction, they focus sharply on the reasons for that natural notion, in effect providing justification for why and how the ordinary identity manifested in self-consciousness has its foundation in the bodily complex. Since they take their eventual task to consist in clarifying the erroneous nature of this natural notion, they take it that it behoves them to be absolutely clear about the content of that notion. This provides good material for philosophizing on the role of the bodily complex in ordinary self-consciousness if we leave out the metaphysical commitment to the non-physical self. Of course, they also then provide arguments for why this natural notion does not capture the right concept of the self; but whether one accepts those arguments or not will depend on the weight one attaches to the traditional Indian sources of epistemic authority on liberation.

The Subjective Self and the Phenomenology of Consciousness

An alternative approach to consciousness is found in Advaita. The cosmogony suggested by its soteriology is radically opposed to everything that physicalism stands for. The irreducible reality is some ground condition only approximately describable (because ineffably transcendental) as a universal consciousness. The self is a continuum only contingently individuated by psychophysical conditions, and its ultimate state is its de-individuation into that universal ground. The self, then, does not have consciousness as a quality; it simply **is** consciousness under certain conditions: 'there is no further conscious seer apart from the seeing'.[75]

For Advaita, as we have seen, the accessibility that the subject of consciousness has to its contents is not through the function of some other, higher-order state, but constitutively part of those contents. If there is no element of phenomenological transparency internal to a process, that process is not a conscious one. According to Advaita, it is not the specificity of each physically determined locus in which consciousness occurs that is striking but the generality of its (consciousness's) nature as reflexive (even if in individuated and embodied loci). Stripping away the specificity of loci, consciousness is a type of occurrence that is characterized by reflexivity.

74 Udayana 1995, p. 3.
75 Śaṅkara 1914, I.iv.10, p. 163.

The self is the consciousness reflexively available within (apparently) pre-determined physical parameters. The primitive presence of consciousness is also the primitive presence of the self in Advaita. This undeniable self is not some substantial entity of which there can be knowledge; its undeniability consists strictly in the inescapability of the occurrence of consciousness.[76]

To the analytic identity of self and consciousness, Advaita adds the thesis, which we have examined in some detail, that the self is never an object of consciousness. The self is simply always the fact of consciousness, and no matter how focussed the point of consciousness, what is objectified is a particular contentful state, never the conscious entity itself, namely, the self. So, in the most rigorous and abstract way, there is no self-knowledge in Advaita if by that is meant knowledge of a self; what is possible is only knowledge of the mental states associated with consciousness.

The Advaitins have a three-fold classification of the self, and it depends on three construals of consciousness. The self is individuated and has its own parametres of reflexive occurrence, given by the body and its apparatus; it is then called the *jīva*. The self is also reflexivity as a general type of occurrent; it is then called *ātman*. Then there is general consciousness, which is typically reflexive and the singular, irreducible, universal entity; it is then called *brahman*. A proper articulation of the Advaitic position must go from highly individuated – personal and subjective – states of awareness to general features across subjects to the universal consciousness.

The distinction between the self as consciousness in itself and the self as the ordinary subject of cognitive states is repeatedly emphasized by Advaita.[77] The former is reflexivity in the sense that it is not specific to any particular set of cognitions, whereas consciousness is encountered in its phenomenological states only in specific embodied loci. But that is not to say that there are two different consciousnesses: particular states of consciousness are what consciousness is when it is specified; they are, we might say, tropes of general consciousness. The individual being is simply (neutral, typical) consciousness individuated by physical conditions and manifested only in specific cognitive states.

It is this identification between the different modes of consciousness that allows the Advaitin to insist that there is continuity between awareness in the *ātman*-mode (cognition in its purely formal aspect (*svarūpajñāna*)) and awareness as we normally have it, in *jīva*-mode (conditioned states (*vṛttijñāna*)). Consciousness as typical reflexivity is not incompatible with the life of the conscious individual. But the soteriological aim is to secure the ultimacy of consciousness free of these contingencies, and that is consciousness as the decidedly transcendental universal being of *brahman*.

On the Advaitic picture, the transcendental sense of self is consciousness itself, rather than the ascription that consciousness makes. In this unliberated life, there is no phenomenological difference on the whole, that is, apart from in liberating realization, for all states of consciousness are expressions of egoity ('I'-ness). General consciousness and individuated consciousness are like fire and wood,

76 Śaṅkara 1917 and Vācaspati 1917, I.i.4.
77 For example, Śaṅkara 1914, IV.iv.6, p. 665.

burner and burnt.[78] There is no way in which it can be said that there is consciousness here (using the demonstrative to indicate the occurrence of consciousness in the present cognitive states) without 'my' being conscious. But that is compatible with maintaining that there is a conceptual – because metaphysical – difference between them.

Consciousness of being conscious involves identification of that which is conscious, or at any rate, involves an attempt to define a being which is conscious. The conclusion is that I am this conscious entity. This putative being to whom consciousness is ascribed by consciousness itself is not the same as consciousness as such. The latter understanding of consciousness is not of it as the object of experience but that which must exist if ordinary (i.e. object-involving and individuated) experience is to be possible. This consciousness is not any specific individuated and object-directed state or set of states of awareness. However, that does not vitiate the claim that every occurrence of consciousness is specific to cognitive states structured by locus and object.

Advaita, it must be noted, does equivocate between the physically embodied individual having access only to the specific mental states and being able to attain de-individuated consciousness (in what is considered liberating realization). This uncertain phenomenology attempts to realize the conceptual distinction between the different construals of consciousness given above.

This general understanding of consciousness is incompatible with physicalism, although it does provide a detailed account of non-cognitive mental states which is akin to various theories of informational content and representation abounding today. If it is to contribute more generally to contemporary consciousness studies (other than as a challenge to physicalism), Advaita must bring methodological strategies to bear on issues about the very study of consciousness. To the possibility of such contributions I now turn.

Advaita recognizes that there is a *prima facie* contradiction between its claim to a universal, ultimate and singular consciousness and the sheer individuality and variety of conscious experience and its objects. The task then becomes two-fold: to provide an account of consciousness that yields something universal to all the variety, and to say how variety is possible if there is only one ultimate consciousness.[79]

While the second is of great interest to the cosmogonic defence of Advaita, the first is of immediate value to consciousness studies; for, given the actual experience of being individual, the first stage in the philosophical de-individuation of the self and (self-)consciousness is to provide for possible non-individual features of consciousness. (This is what post-Kantian philosophers have called the abstraction of consciousness, although in the Advaitic context it is also a generalization of consciousness.) Advaitic accounts of the general/abstract features of consciousness can contribute to contemporary discussions of the logical requirements for the constitution of consciousness, for all that the original motivation is so very different. The exploration of the manifestations of consciousness, especially the requirements for what count as conscious phenomena, is important to Advaita because that allows

78 Sureśvara 1998, III.59–61.

79 For a survey of several Advaitic efforts in this regard, see Appayya Dīkṣita 1937, II.1.

it to re-interpret the manifestations as deriving from one source. But that extra step need not be taken, or can be deferred in (re-)interpretative strategies. What is common to Advaita and consciousness studies is the attempt to come to terms with the commonality of the phenomenological undergoings that count as 'consciousness'.

Ironically, this attempt to provide a theory of consciousness in itself may be of special use to physicalist-based models that want to allow for artificial consciousness free of the organic requirements of body and bodily awareness. One of the intra-physicalist debates concerns the possibility of reduction or even elimination, of any process, event or entity that cannot be explained purely in the language of physics. A type of physicalism can well maintain that, while there are no mental or spiritual entities, there are processes – such as consciousness – that are emergent on physical forces and cannot be explanatorily and terminologically reduced to the language of physics. In other words, while consciousness may lie in the domain of science, it may be only in the domain of the biological (or perhaps chemical) sciences. This is physicalism broadly construed. Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya views of the embodiedness of consciousness will probably most easily lend themselves to this sort of non-reductive physicalism, and implicitly stand against the reduction of consciousness to processes free of organic requirements.

In that case, oddly enough, Advaitic arguments, while being put to uses diametrically opposed to Advaita, can contribute to the strongly reductive project of creating artificial consciousness. By insisting on a way of analysing consciousness as a process that is not intrinsically constrained by body, Advaita provides philosophical grist to the non-biological physicalist. (Of course, there is nothing that Advaita can provide for the actual scientific project of constructing artificial consciousness.)

Less speculatively, the Advaitic analysis of the use of the 'I' can be of great interest in challenging the general assumption that equates self with 'I'-ness. Advaita de-links the 'I'-form from consciousness, even from self-consciousness, and suggests that it is a contingent feature of embodiment. The problems associated with the equation of 'I'-ness with self-consciousness could receive novel treatment through use of the Advaitic material.

The fundamental problem with equating the sense of 'I' with the self of all consciousness – as opposed to any particular (set of) state(s) – is that the luminosity of consciousness seems to require ascription to a bearer by that bearer; at least, that is the most intuitive way of thinking about it, as I have already claimed. That, in turn, calls for reflexive identification through available and pre-existing mental phenomena at the very least, and an account of the nature of this availability and pre-existence. The study of consciousness then leads directly into metaphysics, for even if it is denied that there is some agglomerated entity whose existence explains the availability and pre-existence of identity-forming mental phenomena, that very denial is a matter of metaphysics. In brief, if the reflexivity of consciousness – which could be considered (*contra* Nyāya) a minimal requirement for anything to be called consciousness – is expressed as egocentric ascription through an 'I', there is no getting away from metaphysics for physicalism. Indeed, it ties down consciousness studies to the first task of settling the metaphysics for the minimal requirement for reflexivity. This obviously also poses a problem for any physicalist project of artificial consciousness.

Advaita, of course, takes consciousness to be the self; but as we have seen, this use of 'self' is nothing like standard (even philosophical) usage would have it. What Advaita calls the self is not the physically isolated occurrent of other systems but the sheer fact of reflexivity, whose identity lies, paradoxically, in the non-individuated universality of a singular yet general entity, *brahman*. Again, strangely, this yields a mode of analysis congenial to physicalist consciousness studies. For this radical reading of the 'self' leads Advaita to deny that the individuated isolate of consciousness, signified grammatically and picked out phenomenologically by the 'I', is the irreducible bearer of consciousness. While acknowledging that particular states are indeed formally accompanied by ascription to and by an 'I', Advaita does not take the actual occurrence and nature of consciousness to be a matter of individuated selfhood. It does not interpret reflexivity as egocentric ascription. Indeed, it argues that such ascription is entirely contingent on factors extrinsic to consciousness. So, available and pre-existing phenomena that allow ascription are reduced away from the structure of consciousness. The 'I' is not the constitutive bearer of consciousness; consciousness can be analysed without building in a requirement for an individuated first person.

To repeat, this is done with a vastly counter-intuitive soteriology in view, but (re-)interpretative strategies can concentrate on the freedom from commitment to a metaphysical 'I' that Advaita allows in the study of how consciousness occurs and functions. By relativizing the use of the first person to contingent features, Advaita suggests philosophical grounds for thinking that a physicalist project can proceed in which consciousness does not have a pre-requisite sense of individuated, self-identifying selfhood. Of course, this does not guarantee that a model of consciousness can be constructed and realized in which reflexivity is secured without a sense of individuated selfhood. (And if Advaita is right cosmogonically, consciousness cannot be constructed in any case.)

The most radical use of Advaita in contemporary consciousness studies would be to challenge the entire analytic assumption of the contemporary programme of understanding consciousness. Advaita holds that the self can never be an object, and since the Advaitic self is strictly just consciousness, that is only to say that consciousness as such cannot be an object of study. Whatever it is, it escapes its own attention, for whatever is attended to is the content of consciousness, and not consciousness itself. Physicalist consciousness studies treats consciousness as if it were like, say, blood circulation or neural activity, something that can be objectified. The most basic objection to this attitude is that there is a circularity involved: only when we know what it is that is to be studied can we study it, but the purpose of study is precisely to know what it is. The Advaitic view suggests why this situation occurs: we cannot know what it is that is to be studied because it is not something that can be studied, for all study requires objects, and the self of consciousness is never an object. The ground conditions required for study do not exist in the case of consciousness. This non-existence is not a contingent matter, it is constitutive of consciousness itself: for all study is the exercise of consciousness and consciousness is always just that exercise. It is the seer of the seeing and therefore, whatever is seen, consciousness is not seen, since it is always and only the seeing. If this line of Advaitic thought is pursued and defended, it may provide a deep critique of the dominant aims

of consciousness studies. It could contribute to the radical contemporary response that suggests that the ‘hard problem’ of consciousness (‘what is consciousness?’) cannot be solved precisely because consciousness is conceptually closed to itself.

All that could then be done is systematically to describe the phenomenology of consciousness, find ever finer descriptions of its reflexively available features and thereby gain insight into it. Consciousness studies would proceed but without its objectivist fantasy. The deep Advaitic attention to the tropes of consciousness, again bracketing Advaitic cosmogony, provides a good deal of conceptual analysis of introspective material. Philosophy for Advaita only takes one so far as to exhaust analysis, until the intense absorption into consciousness alone remains. Perhaps the most ancient of strategies, the Upaniṣadic reporting on consciousness, which is the core of Advaitic study, holds out a lesson to the insightful contemporary thinker who is sceptical of the presumptions of physicalist consciousness studies.

In the end, though, despite all the potential of the classical material to be read in novel, physicalist ways, the ancient soteriological concerns must always be acknowledged; and it is to debates over the role and relevance of cognition to the ultimate end of liberation that we turn in the next three chapters of this book.

Chapter 3

Knowledge and Action: On How to Attain the Highest Good

While this book explores many different consequences of valid cognitive grasp of reality, I now move on to a fundamental debate over the very import of knowledge. If knowledge is ultimately important in classical Indian thought, it is because some argue that the highest good is not only attained through knowledge, but is some sort of indefeasible cognitive state in itself. There can, on this view, which is held by the Advaitins, be no greater significance to the consequence of knowledge. Directly contradicting them are the Mīmāṃsakas, who subordinate the attainment and scope of knowledge to the performative value of ritual and ethical conduct. More precisely, the debate concerns the issue of whether action (*karma*) according to injunctions (*codana*) over ritual (and indirectly, virtuous) conduct (*dharma*) is the means to the highest good (*niḥśreyasa*) that is liberation (*mokṣa*), or whether it is right cognition (*jñāna*) of the nature of self (*ātman*) that is the means (and, indeed, the content) of liberation. In this debate, knowledge (*pramā*/*vedana*) refers to the state arrived at through the proper functioning of the cognitive apparatus of the subject in relation to its object. In short, it is the result of the *pramāṇā* system. (For our present purposes, we need not go into the details of the nature of this system.) Action is the structured physical process by which changes are wrought by the embodied agent. While knowledge and action themselves are worthy of analysis, the present discussion can proceed with these intuitive definitions.

Both sides are agreed, as we will see, that knowledge of the self is required in any correctly religious life, that is, in any life oriented towards the attainment of the highest good. And, as befits orthodox exegetes of the sacred texts, they are agreed that a virtuous life is the life lived with the proper performance of those ritual actions enjoined – and the strict avoidance of actions prohibited – by the texts. The real difference lies in their disagreement over the relative evaluation of the importance of action and cognition. This difference is based on two sorts of considerations. One sort has to do with the differences between how action and cognition function in general in affecting a life oriented to an end (howsoever that is conceived). The other sort of consideration has to do with the exact conception of liberation as that end; clearly, what the highest good is intimately relates to the means of attaining it.

To start with, it must be acknowledged that, in their polemical moods, the thinkers tend to exaggerate their emphasis on their favoured candidate for the dominant or primary mode of attaining liberation. However, I will show that much of the discussion proceeds on the agreement that the main issue is over which is the dominant and which the subordinate mode between action and cognition. I will then consider the general issue of how action and cognition function in the transformation

of the ordinary life, into one fit to take the subject to liberation. For the present, it will be possible to be indifferent to the exact conception of liberation; even about the nature of the highest good or end itself.[1] In the second part of this chapter, I will then look more closely at the debate over the specific context of liberation. I will end with the suggestion that, from the role of the conception of liberation in this debate, we can also draw some conclusions about the metaphysics that informs attitudes towards the role and scope of cognition in the attainment of liberation.

The differences over the proper role of knowledge are so deeply presupposed in the later developments of the two schools that it is sometimes hard to detect what exactly the arguments are on either side. However, there are places in the work of the seminal thinkers of the two schools where the issue is clearly stated and debated. It is therefore important to keep the discussion textually clear and, consequently, I will concentrate on the traditional protagonists in this debate, Kumārila Bhāṭṭa for the Mīmāṃsakas and Śaṅkara for the Advaitins, although I will occasionally refer to one or two others of their schools. Of course, this is not quite a debate, as it is really Śaṅkara writing, perhaps a hundred years later, on Kumārila's views. To a certain extent, this historical asymmetry may make this chapter look as if the debate were being seen through Advaitic lenses; I hope, in fact, to make it a neutral analysis of the issue.

Action, Knowledge and the Highest Good

The Two Views Contrasted

Śaṅkara helpfully distinguishes between the fundamental positions of the two schools regarding the issue of whether action or cognition is the primary instrument of liberation, howsoever defined. First, he states and comments on an enigmatic aphorism of the author of the foundational Vedānta text, the *Brahmasūtra*:

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1 I will, to repeat, say something about the highest good – *niḥśreyasa* – as a specific and differing concepts of liberation – *mokṣa* – in Mīmāṃsā and Advaita eventually. The Indian philosophers tend to equate their conception of liberation with the highest good and, for that reason, I am admittedly deviating from tradition in bracketing the exact concept of liberation while looking at the debate on action and knowledge. But I will not be misleading the reader when I use a famous definition from classical Greek philosophy of the final end or goal to indicate a general and neutral notion of the good, which is all that is required for the initial discussion of knowledge and action. 'If, then, there is some end (*telos*) of the things we do, an end which we wish for because of it itself, while we wish for the other things because of it; and if we do not choose everything because of something else – then it is clear that this would be the good, the best [good]' (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094 a 18–23). Of course, there is no comparison between what Aristotle would define as a good and what our Indian philosophers would; but the point then is made even more forcefully that a purely abstract definition of the highest good as the end of human endeavour is intuitively graspable by us. That is sufficient for my purpose.

> Bādarāyaṇa holds that: 'on account of [the authority of] sacred text, the objective of humans is this.' (III.iv.1) The teacher Bādarāyana thinks that the objective of humans is achieved autonomously through the textually provided [true] cognition of the self.[2]

Śaṅkara here is talking about the role of the key assertions in the Upaniṣads on the ultimate nature of the self (i.e. that nature not immediately evident in experience). The Advaitins hold that the end of human existence is a state that requires insight into the meaning of those texts. It seems here that Śaṅkara is willing to claim that insightful knowledge alone is sufficient for the attainment of that end. At once, it is clear that there is a problem with this sort of claim. Once the linguistic content of the relevant knowledge is specified, it becomes accessible to anyone taking the purely intellectual trouble of gaining semantic mastery of the texts. Following the Upaniṣads, the Advaitins say that it is to be known that the *ātman* is *brahman*; but is the academic engaged in the task of fixing the philological and philosophical content of '*ātman*', '*brahman*' and 'is', merely for this reason, engaged too in the soteriological enterprise? Surely not. For such a task would be no different in method and motivation than that of fixing the content of any literary or social scientific term. It must therefore be insisted that, more subtly, more intuitively, less analytically, less concretely, that the intimacy with a piece of knowledge must carry with it qualities that transform its relationship with that knowledge. These qualities must inform not only a certain attitude towards that knowledge, but also more generally the dispositions, priorities, values and concerns of the subject of knowledge. The surrounding life-work of that subject makes the significance of knowledge – in terms of the effect it has on the subject – radically transformative, in a way the 'mere' knowledge of philosophical content does not. After all, this is so even with more mundane, if value-laden knowledge. Is it not the case that the commonly available knowledge that there have been victims of an earthquake has very different significance for people with different dispositions, priorities and values? It is clear that there is some axial requirement to many types of knowledge, particularly so with the soteriological.

After Śaṅkara, Advaita often strives to explain how such a requirement can be met. It is, after all, crushingly evident that it cannot be just the simple hearing or reading of the Upaniṣadic assertions, 'You are that' or 'I am *brahman*' and the like, which leads to the self achieving its transcendental objective. Elaborate accounts were given over the centuries following him of what had to be done in order for the knowledge *simpliciter* of the words to become insightful and transformative. Advaitic instruction came to include methods of study that could transform semantic grasp into transformative insight. The philosophical exploration of the epistemic status of these assertions remained a central and controversial concern of Advaita.[3] Here is a standard summary from a late Advaitic primer, the *Vedāntaparibhāṣa* of Dharmarāja.

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2 Śaṅkara 1917, III.iv.1, p. 868. All references to Śaṅkara are to this book, unless otherwise stated.

3 See Chakrabarti 1995.

> Hearing, thinking and contemplation are instruments of cognition; for in the (scriptural text, the) *Maitreyī Brāhmaṇa*, after reasserting intuition thus, 'the self, indeed, is to be seen', [there is the statement], 'it is to be heard, thought about, contemplated', [which] stipulates hearing, thinking and contemplation as its instruments.[4]

The suitable enrichment – axial and eventually, soteriological – of the initial knowledge of the statements themselves, through (repeated) hearing, critical thinking and contemplation, was therefore recognized by the Advaitins as necessary for liberation.

For our purpose, however, we may bracket that discussion, because Mīmāṃsakas are not concerned with it. That is to say, their disagreement with the Advaitins over the role of knowledge does not take the form of the worry that, clearly, knowledge must be understood in some extended way if it is to perform the function the Advaitins say it can. As we will see, the real issue is as to whether any form of knowledge whatsoever is the sole or even dominant mode of attaining the highest human goal, whatever its exact transcendental content.

The contrast with the Advaitic position is given in the *Brahmasūtra* itself, quoting the view of the Mīmāṃsā aphorist, that such texts are of secondary importance.

> Jaimini holds: '[The self is] a subsidiary [in ritual action]; [the reference to true cognition as instrumental to the human objective is] merely an explanatory statement on the agent, as in other cases.'[5]

The device of an 'explanatory statement' is central to the exegesis of the sacred texts. The body of the texts is classified into five parts: injunctions to actions (*vidhi*), prohibition of actions (*niṣedha*), formulae to accompany and empower actions (*mantra*), names that define a set of systematically related and enjoined actions (*nāma*) and explanatory statements (*arthavāda*). These exhaust everything in the texts, meaning that nothing in them is without a role and purpose. A typical and well-known introductory text on Mīmāṃsā ritual theory, the *Arthasaṃgraha* of Laugākṣi Bhāskara, says this about explanatory statements:

> An explanatory statement is a sentence, which aims at glorification or censure [of a ritual act]; and, through indirect indication, it finally leads to a matter with a [direct] purpose … And it should not be said that, since knowledge of praise and the like has no direct purpose, the explanatory statement is no explanation [for anything] … It is useful because knowledge of it generates activity in an inactive subject.[6]

This sums up exactly the position on knowledge, especially of the self, taken by Kumārila nearly a thousand years before the *Arthasaṃgraha*. In Bādarāyaṇa's terse understanding of Jaimini's original position, knowledge is **at most** for the purpose of establishing that the understanding of the nature of the agent of ritual action motivates such action. But that is far from saying that it has any major role, let alone the primary one, in carrying one to the highest end (howsoever defined). Kumārila

4 Dharmarāja 1942 IX.21, pp. 159–60.
5 Śaṅkara, III.iv.2, p. 870.
6 Laugākṣi Bhāskara 1984, pp. 66–7.

is occasionally emphatic on this point. He holds that neither personal experience nor sacred authority bears out the claim that knowledge is the instrument through which the highest human objective is attained.

> The senses, etc. do not convey [the idea] that right cognition is the determinant of liberation. Nor, as held by the Sāṃkhya [school] and others, does the Veda teach that liberation results from right cognition.[7]

It is unclear as to what aspects of early Advaita Kumārila would have had access, although he must have been acquainted with Bādarāyana's Vedānta aphorisms, which are, of course, not in themselves Advaitic. However, this aspect of Sāṃkhya thought (amongst others) was taken up by Advaita. Sāṃkhya itself became much less of a force in the later half the first millennium, whereas Advaita became a dominant presence in that time. I have therefore taken the liberty of reading Kumārila's contention as if it applied to Advaita too.

The exact content of the disagreement will not be evident from this preliminary statement of the two views; but we have something to start with. If there is one thing clear here, it is that the difference appears to be sharp: whatever the precise manner in which action and cognition are related to a supreme goal, and howsoever that is defined, it would seem that Mīmāṃsā and Advaita differ on which of the two means is instrumental in the attainment of that goal. In fact, the issue is more complex than that.

An Agreement: Action and Cognition Cannot in Themselves Change the Other

Advaita and Mīmāṃsā are agreed that action and cognition are not intrinsically able to change the content of the other. However, they typically differ on which lack of influence to stress. Kumārila argues that knowing something does not automatically mean that such action as was going to be taken (before that knowledge was gained) will not be taken or will be changed.

> Then again, right cognition is … not contrary to that intrinsic potential [for action in a subject]; for right cognition does not enter into opposition with the potential for action. Though it is accepted that lack of right cognition brings about [wrong] actions, as it does attachment and the like (i.e. obstructions to a proper life), they are not removed by [right] cognition.[8]

Kumārila here expresses a characteristic scepticism about the transformative potential of knowledge. Clearly, he has in mind prudential knowledge that can seem, in ordinary cases, to be able to co-exist with ('not be contrary to') action incompatible with it. One may know that infidelity is wrong (regardless of what the subject takes to be the source of such a moral truth) and therefore not to be committed, and still do it. One may know that gambling is ruinous and still gamble. One with a tendency

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7 Kumārila 1978, V.16.102. All further references to Kumārila are from this book, unless otherwise stated.

8 Kumārila, V.16.94–5.

('intrinsic potential') to seek sexual gratification or take irrational risks will act thus, even with what amounts to countervailing knowledge. It must be noted that the point is less persuasive when we consider factual knowledge. The tendency to continue to act in a certain way – for example, running straight without concern for obstacles – is unlikely to be unchanged by knowledge of the state of affairs – e.g., of a tree being straight in front of one. It is not utterly irrational, and often entirely understandable within some reasonable account of human nature, to hold that prudential knowledge does not always influence tendencies to act in certain ways. But it is only in extreme cases of unbalanced behaviour that perceptual knowledge does not change a relevant action. Kumārila's line of thought, however, does not seem to me to be seriously compromised by this failure of generality, for its application does not lie in factual knowledge.

His point, in any case, is made against the background of the idea that the quest for the highest good is undertaken against lumpen inertia or even the pull of virtueless desires. The highest good precisely is freedom from a life conditioned by a variety of potential and realized actions. Kumārila insists that knowledge of virtue can perfectly co-exist with virtueless states, like attachment to material things. He thinks that his opponent is misled by an apparent symmetry. It is perfectly true that **erroneous** cognitions **result** in wrong (virtueless) actions. (One might think wrongly that the odds can be beaten and that one has the self-control to stop when ahead, and keep on gambling.) But that does not mean that **right** cognitions can **stop** wrong actions. That symmetry is beguiling but illusory. His opponent is mistaken if they think that the attainment of knowledge of the good (the ritually correct, the virtuous, the moral, the prudential) can stop actions that are set against it. (His opponent and he are agreed that the whole religious enterprise is undertaken in the face of such actions or tendencies thereof.)

Another symmetry, however, may exist. If **erroneous** cognitions lead to **wrong** actions, **right** cognitions may lead to **correct** actions. That, indeed, is just what Kumārila argues, and we will later see exactly why. The difference between the two cases is that, in the latter, which Kumārila accepts, the outcome is action, correct action, whereas in the former, which he rejects, the outcome is supposed to be the stoppage of action. This is vital for Mīmāṃsā. If knowledge is allowed to stop action, then that amounts to acknowledging that knowledge is the later and superior mode for the attainment of the highest good, since knowledge would then exist without action. On the other hand, if knowledge only leads to action, as in the symmetry Kumārila upholds, then knowledge becomes only the way to – and therefore an auxiliary of – action; and action remains as the later and superior mode. Kumārila therefore states:

> That right cognition destroys action is not established …[9]

More widely, cognitions cannot change actions.

9 Kumārila, V.16.96.

Śaṅkara seems to make almost the same point about the possibility of cognition and actions being without mutual influence.

> Whether it is a failure of cognition or a doubtful cognition or erroneous cognition, miscognition is always removed by true cognition; but not by action in any form whatsoever, for there is no contradiction between them (i.e. action and cognition).[10]

The assertion that there is no contradiction between doing and knowing echoes Kumārila's claim on the matter. But it is obvious, given what we have just seen of the Mīmāṃsā position, that the Advaitic emphasis is just the opposite of the former. Śaṅkara asserts that action cannot change cognition. (Clearly, Śaṅkara is using 'action' in a strict sense. After all, if one does not know what is at the bottom of the garden or thinks that it may be a ghost, cannot one settle the epistemic issue through the act of walking down the garden to take a closer look? But, the Advaitins would respond, it is not the walking as such that changes the epistemic situation, but the cognition that constitutes the looking. So, when they argue that action cannot change cognition, they do not mean to include cognitive processes that occur in the course of action. Now, as our ordinary example shows, the Advaitins cannot exclude action from the process whereby miscognition is removed by right cognition, but Śaṅkara is not worried by that. He is perfectly willing to grant (most of the time) that action is undertaken during an epistemic process. Applied to the special case of his disagreement with the Mīmāṃsakas, this means granting that ritual action has some role in the life directed to the attainment of the highest goal through knowledge. Such action, however, cannot be other than subsidiary to the epistemic process.)

There is, then, a disagreement, as we would have expected, behind the initially surprising agreement over the mutual lack of influence between action and cognition. Occasionally, this mutual independence is overstated, so much so that it indeed looks surprising in what we know to be the larger context of disagreement. Kumārila is usually only willing to concede that the acquisition of knowledge of the self is not inconsistent with the continued performance of ritual actions. It is only in this limited way that action and knowledge are allowed in parallel.

Nevertheless, it is interesting that the complexity of the situation is such that both sides allow both action and right cognition into their account of the path to the highest good, although, of course, only on their own, differing, terms. The recognition that both action and knowledge are instrumental lends nuance to their respective positions. But the acceptance of both action and knowledge obviously does not mean the end of disagreement. Each side emphasizes the dominance of one and the subordination of the other mode in their respective accounts of the instrumentality of action and knowledge.

10 Śaṅkara, III.iii.1, p. 425.

The Nature of Dominance and Subordination in the Relationship between Action and Cognition

Once we have seen that both sides are agreed that action and knowledge have different roles to play, we can examine their respective views on how those roles interact. The difference between Mīmāṃsā and Advaita views on action and knowledge can best be grasped through the concept of a relationship of dominance and subordination. To put it simply, Mīmāṃsā holds action to be the dominant and knowledge to be the subordinate means to the highest goal, and Advaita maintains that it is the other way around. The dual concept of dominance and subordination is evident in what the two sides say about knowledge and action in the attainment of the highest good.

Kumārila grants that knowledge has a role, although action itself may be either for a lesser or for the highest good.[11]

> 'Know the self' has not been enjoined with liberation as its objective. It [merely] indicates that self-knowledge rationalizes the undertaking of action.[12]

The assertion that the highest good is not the 'objective' (*artha*) of knowledge indicates that the Mīmāṃsaka does not hold knowledge to be directly functional upon it. When following the injunctions of the sacred texts, the subject of knowledge should not be motivated by the attainment of liberation at the time of the acquisition of knowledge; rather, they should concentrate on learning to act properly. This is psychologically apt, because it is Kumārila's contention that knowledge does not by itself bring about the final end. Given this, we can see how dominant and subordinate modes are defined.

A: Dominant mode: a mode of attainment is dominant if it leads immediately to its good.

B: Subordinate mode: a mode is subordinate if it only contributes to the efficacy of the dominant mode.

However, Kumārila, in a way that characterizes subsequent philosophy in his sub-school, does not assert that knowledge plays no role whatsoever. Knowledge is certainly sought with correct action as its objective, and such action brings about the highest good. As such, it relates to that good indirectly. Moreover, it 'gives reason' for undertaking action, for it shows the agent why action is to be undertaken and how, once undertaken, it is efficacious. (To examine the details of this claim would take us into the specifics of Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā metaphysics, which cannot

11 Jaimini, in the original *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, has no conception of the highest good, beyond a vague notion of a heaven, a realm or state in which human needs are met. He is concerned strictly with the idea of ritual action as called for by the very nature of human existence within an ordered cosmos; and only occasionally, in recognition of human motivation, does he mention that material prosperity is the outcome of correctly performed ritual. Francis Clooney has argued persuasively that Jaimini's ritual concerns were far removed from the metaphysical framework that Kumārila imposed in his reading (Clooney 1990).

12 Kumārila, V.16.103.

be done here.) By admitting this, Kumārila in effect grants that, although action is the dominant means, it is not the sole one. It leads directly to the highest good, but knowledge is what leads to that action. (For Śaṅkara, as we will see, the dominance of knowledge occasionally hardens into its being the sole mode for the attainment of liberation, and action is denied any role.) Action, for Kumārila, has knowledge as a prerequisite; knowledge qualifies the agent of action.[13]

Pārthasārathi, commenting on this verse in the *Nyāyaratnākara*,[14] calls such knowledge of the self 'discriminating cognition' (*vivekajñāna*) which is for the purpose of learning about action with otherworldly results (*pāralaukikaphala*). The utility of that knowledge is visible (*dṛṣṭa*); such knowledge does not have any reference to invisible fruit. This seems puzzling because otherworldly results surely are not visible. But this makes sense once we realize that the utility of knowledge is severely constrained here. The objective of knowledge is proper ritual; the ritual itself may have otherworldly or transcendental outcomes such as liberation, but the outcome of knowledge, strictly speaking, is the proper performance of the ritual in this world, and that, of course, is visible. So, the correct understanding of knowledge's having ritual action as its outcome should be that its reference is to action alone and not to the fruit of such action. Once more, knowledge is subordinated, even if allowed into the process as a prerequisite for attaining the final end.

The Mīmāṃsā position, then, is that knowledge is only for the sake of action. Yet there undeniably are sacred texts which clearly assert that knowledge has its own results. This suggests that knowledge can autonomously relate to human goals. Given that the understanding of the texts is of paramount importance, the Mīmāṃsakas have to read such assertions in a manner suitable to their position:

> Even if there is mention of results (arising from knowledge), this must be understood as being for another objective; what is found must merely be explanatory, and the result is [in any case] nothing other than heaven and the like.[15]

Kumārila, using the familiar exegetical classification of texts, which we have already encountered, says that such mention is purely explanatory in that it points out what knowledge is eventually for. It functions as an exhortation to action by assuring the ritual agent that knowledge justifies and prompts action. Texts that mention the result

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13 It is quite likely that a historical circumstance made Kumārila allow such a role for knowledge. It is evident in his writing on the nature of the self (knowledge of the self is, in the main, the knowledge with which he is concerned). He usually took his major opponents to be Yogācāra Buddhists, then dominant on the Indian scene. They denied, like other Buddhists, a unified self. They also, of course, denied the authority of Vedic injunctions to action. Kumārila's argument in the *ātmavāda* section of the *Ślokavārttika* is that a unified self is required for Vedically enjoined actions to fructify, and knowledge of this is needed to give motivational assurance to the agent of such action. The denial of the self, therefore, has to be refuted if the efficacy of Vedic actions is to be demonstrated. It is, therefore, important for him to establish knowledge of a unified self, in the context of acting according to Vedic injunctions.

14 Pārthasārathi, 1978 V.16.103.

15 Kumārila, V.16.104.

of knowledge link knowledge with a goal that is arrived at only through action, but elide mention of action at this juncture, so as to emphasize the eventual utility of knowledge. Kumārila loosely talks of 'heaven and the like' as the ends of knowledge-based action, but Pārthasārathi, in his commentary on this verse, clarifies that such mention is for taking one closer to the result (*phala*) of both prosperity (*abhyudaya*) (which counts as a lesser good) and the highest good. In such textual contexts, where knowledge seems so important, the Mīmāṃsaka cannot quite say that the subject of knowledge should keep action alone as the objective of knowledge without thought of the highest good. The subordination of knowledge is thus weakened by the acknowledgement that it eventually contributes to the attainment of that good, although only *via* the action that it informs.

The subordination of knowledge to action in Mīmāṃsā is expressed through two claims:

1. knowledge informs and motivates action; and
2. it is action which takes the person to the highest good.

These claims can be read as expressing commitment to the subordination of knowledge according to definition B above. That would be mean that for Kumārila:

> B1: Strong subordination of knowledge: knowledge cannot at all refer to the highest good in acquiring knowledge, taking the proper understanding of the agent, basis and nature of action alone as its purpose.

But Kumārila sometimes compromises on the role of knowledge, and weakens the claims to mean:

> B2: Weak subordination of knowledge: knowledge is still gained with action in mind, but because such action is efficacious towards the highest good, knowledge functions as a mediate mode for the attainment of that good.

Kumārila sometimes makes an interesting use of these distinctive readings of the status of knowledge, meaning to harmonize them:

> In all cases, knowledge is found to be for purification (or for making perfect), therefore, an auxiliary to something else. The exception is knowledge of the self. As for knowledge of the self: through both conjunction and disjunction, it is seen to be for the purposes of the sacrifice and of the person. Without it, actions to be undertaken and to be avoided for the sake of results beyond the world would not be possible.[16]

Kumārila often includes knowledge of self in knowledge that is strongly subordinate to action. But here, he claims that strong subordination (as interpreted under B1) refers only to other types of knowledge, while knowledge of self is construed as weakly subordinate (i.e. understood according to B2), leading to liberation (albeit mediately). In the main, he imposes B1 on hermeneutic and moral knowledge, that is, the interpretation of the context and content of text and of virtuous conduct in

16 Kumārila 1986, I.3.29, Vol. I, p. 597.

the stages and stations of life. The central metaphysical knowledge of the self, in contrast, he admits to be directed at the eventual attainment of the highest goal, and therefore subordinate only under B2. Of course, such knowledge is still gained so as to motivate action. The truth is that a unified self, functioning indirectly through the body in the performance of ritual action, can benefit from consequences accruing to that self; and only where there is knowledge of this truth can there be motivation to undertake such action. (This is the burden of the argument in the *ātmavāda* section of the *Ślokavārttika*.) Self-knowledge, therefore, does not lose its direct orientation to action alone; nevertheless, more is granted to it than to other forms of knowledge. However, this way of resolving the tension between the two construals of the subordination of knowledge to action is not consistently pursued, and remains but a suggestive direction of interpretation.

Let us now turn to Advaita. We have already encountered Śaṅkara's emphatic assertion that the teaching of Bādarāyana exalts knowledge. We can see here that he asserts this in the face of the Mīmāṃsā view of knowledge as qualification for ritual action.

> Now, the question is whether the (true) cognition of the self given through a sacred text enters into action through the medium of a person having competence [in such action] or whether it is all by itself the objective of humans. At the very start of the investigation, he [the teacher] answers thus: 'the objective of humans is through this'. The teacher Bādarāyana thinks that the objective of humans is achieved autonomously through the textually provided [true] cognition of the self.[17]

In making this vigorously one-sided assertion, he introduces a different notion of what domination means. Indeed, it is difficult even to put this in terms of the domination–subordination relationship because of the position he accords to knowledge. The final end is achieved autonomously through knowledge. Not only does knowledge not serve as a prerequisite to action, it leaves action altogether out of the quest for the highest good.

> A1: Strong dominance of knowledge: Knowledge leads immediately but also autonomously to the highest good

(This radical assertion of autonomy is not mirrored in Mīmāṃsā; once engaged in philosophical debate, after all, there is little scope left for the denial of the utility of knowledge. What we can say is that in Jaimini's original aphorisms, the paramount significance of action in the proper life is evident in the exclusive attention he pays to it and the conditions he claims under which it is undertaken; knowledge is ignored. However, Jamini does not obviously talk of the highest human good, contenting himself with the vague statement that there is one result of following injunctive action, and that is heaven (*svarga*).[18] That is to say, where knowledge is insignificant in the earliest stratum of Mīmāmsā, there the question of a conception of the highest good does not arise. Maybe the sheer and sole attention to ritual detail and

17 Śaṅkara, III.iv.1, p. 868.

18 Jaimini 1889, IV.3.1314.

exegesis in textbooks such as Laugākṣi Bhāskara's *Arthasaṃgraha*[19] and Āpadeva's *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa*[20] shows the extent to which concern for action excludes any concern for knowledge. But this is argument from silence for B1.) What exactly are we to make of the claim, 'the objective of humans is achieved autonomously … through cognition'? Autonomy (*svatantra* – literally, self-rule) surely means here that knowledge can function entirely without requiring any presence for, leave alone the qualifying influence of, action. The strongest Advaitic position, then, is just what our very first impression of it had it: knowledge alone is the mode of attaining the highest good. There is no relationship of dominance and subordination here, given the utter rejection of one of the elements of the possible relationship.

It must, however, be admitted that the autonomy of knowledge does not always seem to imply the utter rejection of action for Śaṅkara. For example, at one point he seems to take autonomy to be reciprocal:

> We only wish to explain that, as the cognition of self through the Upaniṣads has an autonomous purpose, it does not become the cause of the generation of competence in [virtuous] action. This should be seen as being like the way in which competence in one ritual does not depend on knowledge of some other ritual.[21]

While invoking autonomy in his rejection of the standard Mīmāṃsā claim that knowledge is a requirement for action, it appears that he grants that knowledge and action have their own – equally valid – independent lives. In his analogy, the autonomy of ritual X consists in its requirements having no role in the performance of ritual Y; hence, X and Y co-exist without mutual influence, and their autonomy consists in just this reciprocal lack. Just so, the autonomy of knowledge merely implies that it does not depend and is not dependent on action; which is to grant action its own autonomy vis-à-vis knowledge.

As we will see in the next section of this chapter, Śaṅkara actually conceives of a hierarchy of modes of attainment: the fruit of action *sans* knowledge is inferior to that of action with knowledge. But the fruit of neither is the highest good; that is attained through knowledge alone. So, he does not give up much when he admits reciprocal autonomy between knowledge and action after all. In short, for Śaṅkara:

> B3: Strong subordination of action: action is the mode of attainment of a good, but only one that is not the highest, since the highest good can only be attained through knowledge

Taking the dominance of knowledge to lie in its autonomy from action conflicts with the orthoprax reluctance to give up the traditional way of male brahmin life. Sometimes, Śaṅkara slips from one to another way of looking at the relationship (or absence thereof) between knowledge and action:

> You may say that since the [teaching of a] pure life [by the texts] is seen, knowledge is subordinate to action. Here we say that, equally it is seen that the pure life does not have knowledge subordinate to action. Thus there is the sacred text: 'The Kāvaṣeya sages,

19 Laugākṣi Bhāskara 1984.
20 Āpadeva 1929.
21 Śaṅkara, III.iv.12, p. 875.

who had fully comprehended that [reality] asked, "Why should we study, why should we perform rituals?" (Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad II.5)'.[22]

In this passage, the initial debate is over the familiar issue of which mode qualifies which. The Mīmāṃsaka points to texts where the very mention of purity indicates action, for purity is realized in a life of proper conduct, and such conduct is exemplified in ritual action. According to the Mīmāṃsaka, such action is informed by knowledge, but that only shows that knowledge is subordinate to action. Śaṅkara responds by saying that, equally, a proper life is shown in other texts to be secured purely on epistemic grounds. Now, this suggests the claim that a pure life is one in which action is subordinate to – because it precedes – liberating knowledge. However, the example he gives here (a favourite that he quotes repeatedly) points to a much more dramatic conclusion. The proper life, that of the Kāvaṣeya sages, is one in which all ritual action is discarded upon the attainment of knowledge. And this is so only assuming that, when they ask why they should perform rituals, they mean to ask why they should **continue** to perform them; for it is not clear that they ever engaged in ritual action. The latter possibility, of course, is remote; it is difficult to see the brahmin philosophers of Śaṅkara's time ever thinking that their ancient exemplars were devoid of ritual purity. But, even if the safer assumption is made that the passage indicates the knowing sages to have given up ritual action, that is still a strong construal of the dominance of knowledge. This construal does not quite drop all reference to action. It holds, at the very least, that action can be discarded upon the attainment of the relevant knowledge. The pure life will have had ritual action – for any Vedic exegete will have to admit that purification is a process whose vehicle is ritual. However, once there has been insightful knowledge of the self, where such knowledge opens up the subject to the ultimate state, then action can be discarded:

B4: Weak subordination of action: action ceases to be a functional mode only when it has led to the attainment of knowledge that can lead to the attainment of the highest good

That which is subordinate is that which is discarded upon the achievement of the dominant mode. This is still to give less to action than Mīmāṃsā gives to knowledge in B2, for in the latter, there is a recognition that a subordinate mode is nevertheless a mediate cause of liberation.

Śaṅkara nuances his account of the subordinate nature of action through the notion of connection (*saṃyoga*):

Actions according to the stage of life, for all the stages of life, like oblations and the rest, as well as calmness and forbearance, are relevant to the production of knowledge. Even there, in [the expression] 'one knows this', calmness, etc., which are proximate means to the obtaining of knowledge because of being [intrinsically] connected to knowledge, should be discriminated from oblations, etc., which are extrinsic means connected [only] through the desire to have knowledge.[23]

22 Śaṅkara, III.iv.9, p. 874.
23 Śaṅkara, III.iv.28, p. 900.

Action and attitudes contribute in changing the quality of the subject's epistemic grasp, so that knowledge becomes liberating. They are thus connected to knowledge, which, of course, is the dominant mode for the Advaitin. But virtuous attitudes form and transform the consciousness in which knowledge dawns. They are therefore intrinsic to the very structure of knowing awareness, even if they only qualify the subject of knowledge and thereby serve as subordinated pre-requisites. Action is not intrinsic to consciousness, for it is undertaken by the embodied subject of consciousness and therefore premised on a distinction between it and consciousness. (This would not be contested by the Mīmāṃsaka. Kumārila begins the *ātmavāda* section (V.18.1) of the *Ślokavārttika* by saying that the self has no direct relationship (*sākṣātsaṃbandha*) with the performance of ritual actions like sacrifices. It only has indirect functionality (*lakṣaṇāvṛtti*) by way of the body (*śarīra*).) Action connects to knowledge only because the subjects in quest of that knowledge understand that certain actions purify them and prepare their awareness for the advent of knowledge. Action carries the subjects, who are desirous of knowledge, through to a state of being prepared for knowledge. The elaboration here is of a subordinate means as either proximate or distal in its functioning towards the objective of securing the dominant mode. Proximity consists in being intrinsic to the nature of that dominant mode and distance in being extrinsic to it. Extrinsicity, further, consists in being directly connected only to the motivation towards acquiring the dominant mode and not to the mode itself. The notion that action has knowledge as its objective is clarified as its being the mode for making the motivation towards knowledge efficient:

> B4a: Weak subordination of proximate action: action ceases to be a functional mode only when its performance, which is intrinsic to the attainment of knowledge, leads to that knowledge that can lead to the attainment of the highest good.

> B4b: Weak subordination of distal action: action ceases to be a functional mode only when its performance, in the pursuit of knowledge, has led to that knowledge that can lead to the attainment of the highest good.

Despite this emphatic assertion of the strong domination of knowledge over action, it must be said that Śaṅkara does, in places, see action as having a much bigger role in the life oriented to the highest good. We will turn to this in the next section, but one last way of subordinating action to knowledge in Advaita gives some indication of how this conciliation proceeds:

> Even action, when conjoined with cognition, produces the end that is liberation. But liberation is not effected (or brought about or entered into); how, therefore, can it be the product of action? That is not a problem. Action facilitates [the acquisition of knowledge] from a distance. Since such action attains cognition mediately, it is virtually a means of liberation.[24]

This is a reworking of B4, so as to suggest that the role of action – while in detail nothing different from what the Advaitin has been saying so far – can be interpreted

24 Śaṅkara, IV.i.16, p. 960.

as in some way connected with the highest good. And in this formulation, the Advaitic position mirrors that of the Mīmāṃsaka in B2;

> B4*: Weak subordination of action restated: action ceases to be a functional mode only when it has led to the attainment of knowledge that can lead to the attainment of the highest good, and therefore is a mediate – and virtual – mode for the attainment of that good.

We will now look at how the positions of Mīmāṃsā and Advaita should, taken as a whole, be best taken as working with B2 and B4* respectively; that is, the interpretation of both schools should be understood as granting a major role for both action and knowledge, despite the emphasis being on one or the other.

The Need for both Action and Knowledge

If knowledge informs action and action is for the highest goal, then knowledge eventually does function for the attainment of that goal. This, however, does not weaken the real position of the Bhāṭṭa Mīmaṃsaka, which we have seen involves not so much a denial of the functionality of knowledge as the assertion of its lower status. This lower status is evident, according to Kumārila, in that nothing that is given to the person through knowledge changes the imperative to action:

> But it is not the case that because it [the self] is fixed by cognition, it resists all connection with action. For duties, to do with the stages of life and with class, have to be performed, for the purpose of destroying the ill from past action and for removing the sins that would follow [any future] non-performance of obligatory actions.[25]

Whatever is gained by and in self-knowledge, the need to act is not removed. Recompensatory and obligatory action are essential to all classical Indian systems that work with the assumption of *karma*; but as we will see later, it is particularly relevant to the Mīmāṃsā conception of liberation. In sum, then, what we need to register is that knowledge is accepted, but with a subordinate status, by Kumārila within the larger enterprise of the life driven by proper, ritual action.[26] I have summed this up under B2.

The response of the Advaitins response to this subordinating acceptance of knowledge is more complex. They have, broadly, two ways of arguing for the superiority of knowledge over action. One, B3, is to say that action is useful and effective in the attainment of a lesser good, while knowledge is for the attainment of the highest. Another way of arguing, B4, is to accept that both are for the highest good, but that action is a preliminary mode while knowledge is the advanced one. Let us look in greater at these, in order to explore how they all lead eventually to the sort of compromise expressed in B4*.

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25 Kumārila 1986, 1.3.29, vol. I, p. 597.

26 To make a comparativist remark: It is probably right to say that, philosophically speaking, the Mīmāṃsā attitude to the proper life as a combination of knowledge and action informed by that knowledge, where the knowledge is both of the agent of action and the authoritative sources of action, is recognizably nearer classical Western models than the radical insistence on the autonomous efficacy of knowledge that we find in Advaita.

Śaṅkara, as one would expect of an orthoprax defender of sacred ritual, wants really to assimilate the proper life of Vedically enjoined ritual into his grand metaphysical project of explaining how the particular consciousness of the self (*ātman*) (re)attains *brahman*, a supreme universal consciousness in which no delimiting individuation occurs.

> The investigations of virtuous action and the universal consciousness differ as to their fruit and [method of] inquiry. The knowledge of *dharma* has prosperity as its result; it is dependent on performance. Knowledge of *brahman* has the highest good as its result and is not dependent on performance [for its accomplishment].[27]

Later, we will look more closely at the Advaitic conception of the highest good in the context of the functional efficacy of knowledge. For the moment, the point to be noted is that Śaṅkara equates the life of virtuous action with the life that has prosperity – this-worldly well-being – as its goal. He picks up the fact that even the metaphysically-minded Mīmāṃsaka – like Kumārila – is committed to the original Jaiminian view that the knowledge of virtuous conduct – specifically, knowledge of those, mostly ritual, actions that the Vedas enjoin – leads to well-being in this world. He then contends that that is all that is achieved through the knowledge which leads to ritual action. Its worth is realized only through and in ritual action; that is what is meant by saying that it is 'dependent on performance'. It is purely instrumental knowledge, this knowledge of the actions enjoined or proscribed by the texts. Kumārila does admit some more metaphysical knowledge, namely, knowledge that the nature of the self as the agent of ritual action is indirectly related to such action through the body. But Śaṅkara's point is not affected by this increase in the theoretic content of knowledge. In the end, he holds, it is still instrumental; it is eventually only for the sake of clarifying the nature of, and thereby motivating, ritually qualified virtuous conduct. Such conduct, for him, only brings about well-being in this world; that is an orthodox belief which he is not prepared to deny. Still, it is only well-being; it is a good, but not the highest good. For the latter, only knowledge will do, for the highest good is a cognitive state, not accomplished through action.

This line of argument, as expressed in B3, strongly subordinating action to knowledge, cannot meet the consideration that ritual action is for more than the attainment of prosperity. Kumārila, after all, is not concerned with prosperity alone. He holds that there is a transcendental state of liberation from the conditions of life, which is therefore the highest goal of that life, one that is attained through proper action. The Advaitins, therefore, make a different case for the highest good. They acknowledge that the highest good may be the goal of action, but insist that it is so only indirectly. In short, B3 is ineffective against B2. A passage in Śaṅkara shows a characteristic conjunction of Advaitic moves in this regard:

> Actions such as the *agnihotra* ritual when conjoined with knowledge are superior to actions such as the *agnihotra* ritual entirely without knowledge … Nevertheless, actions such as *agnihotra* rituals without knowledge are not completely irrelevant … The *agnihotra* ritual, etc., when conjoined with knowledge, by virtue of the capacity given to them by

27 Śaṅkara, I.i.1, p. 69.

> their being so conditioned by knowledge, are pre-eminent in achieving self-cognition, as any such actions are superior; this is not so with that [action] which is without knowledge. Such sacred assertions as, 'Endeavour to know through sacrifice', which subordinate the *agnihotra*, etc., as auxiliaries to self-cognition, should not be taken as making them [utter] non-auxiliaries. Thus, sacred assertions like, 'Whatever is done with knowledge, commitment and esoteric practice becomes potent', speak of a certain sort of pre-eminence to actions such as *agnihotra* when conjoined with knowledge, given by their gaining ever more potency with respect to their own ends. In doing so, they point to that [action] which is without knowledge as having at least some potency in fulfilling its purpose.[28]

A commitment to Vedic ritual, within the larger exegetical tradition, is clearly made: Śaṅkara does not want to imply that action according to the sacred texts can be fruitless. He wants to preserve the efficacy of ritual action in ordinary life, that is, the life that is not yet at the point of realization of the highest good. He wants there to be a transcendence of ritual in the attainment of that good, not a rejection of it. At the same time, of course, he does not want ritual action to be the primary instrument. He therefore argues that ritual action is indeed efficacious towards the highest good, but only in so far as it subserves the attainment of liberating self-knowledge. There is then the worry that such action, when severed from the epistemic enterprise, would become inefficacious. Śaṅkara responds by saying that it would be incomplete in its efficacy, not devoid of it. One can see this uncharitably as damning with faint praise, but he thinks it achieves the objective of keeping his theory free of the taint of anti-Vedic anti-brahminism, even though the soteriology of his theory – contained in A1 – challenges exactly the core practices of that brahminical way of life.

Śaṅkara sometimes surprisingly tacks against the current of his own commitment to renunciation (*saṃnyāsa*), which is explicitly without ritual action, and which he repeatedly identifies with the path of valid cognition.[29] But the passage below is interesting for more than its demonstration of a tension in his work. It shows how a reasonable way of linking action to knowledge can be found within the Advaitic emphasis on the primacy of the latter.

> Here, the issue is whether knowledge is completely independent of the duties of the several stages of life or is somehow dependent ... Of course, knowledge is dependent on all the duties of the various stages of life, it is not completely independent ... Once it has emerged, [however] knowledge does not depend on anything else for the attainment of its fruit. But it is so dependent for its emergence ... Authoritative [though not sacred] texts too say this; for instance, 'Action burns up impurities while (valid) cognition is the supreme goal. When action has burnt up impurities, (valid) cognition emerges.'[30]

This goes back to the very general worry that meets the philosopher who insists on the primacy of knowledge in the attainment of a good. We saw earlier that it had to be accepted that the seeker of knowledge had to be enriched by values and concerns

28 Kumārila, IV.i.18, p. 963.

29 See Rukmani 1998. Rukmani points out that Śaṅkara has to read against the grain of the *Gītā* to get his favoured interpretation of it as stressing the path of knowledge and renunciation.

30 Śaṅkara, III.iv.26, p. 898.

that allowed the knowledge attained to be transformative in a way mere semantic mastery of it could not be. That is why the Advaitins subsequently developed theories of mental virtues such as was described by Dharmarāja. (It may be noted in passing that the Advaitins are by no means unique in this matter. In fact, the cultivation of various virtues was always absolutely central to all Buddhist schools, especially when, as in Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, they asked for a high degree of critical analysis as part of the quest for enlightenment. Nyāya too has requirements on motivation, environment, attitude, and method, when dealing with knowledge for liberation.) Śaṅkara's mollifying suggestion about ritual action is that it is precisely a means of preparing the subject for the acquisition of transformative knowledge. It makes for the purification (*saṃskāra*) of the person.

Of course, that quasi-axial, apparently nomological presupposition of classical pan-Indian thought, the notion of *karma*, is called upon when ritual is held to have the consequence of destroying the accretions of earlier actions and inclinations. But the thought here can be seen in a much less specific way, as referring to the manner in which virtuous conduct makes the person have just that virtuous life as makes them transformable through knowledge. After all, ritual action for the brahmin philosopher precisely is virtuous action, since all virtue is instantiated in acting upon the authoritative assertions of the Vedas. (That is to say, it is entirely reasonable to take it that different cultures will take virtuous conduct to be derived from specific sources. There is no loss of generality to the point that action helps in the transformative response to knowledge even when such action is given in some culturally specific way, e.g. Vedically enjoined ritual.)

Coming some centuries after Śaṅkara, and acutely aware of the need to address Advaitic polemics, Pārthasārathi Miśra, the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsaka, in his *Śāstradīpikā*, complexifies his school's position. Of course, he reiterates the subordinate role of knowledge, but in arguing that ritual action itself has a range of goals – as he must against Advaitic criticism that Mīmāṃsā action is restricted in aim – he grants knowledge too a range of goals, albeit through action:

> Well, is knowledge of the self not for sacred ritual action? True, but it is also for the highest human goal; for the conjunctions [between knowledge and action, given in sacred assertions] make a distinction. Knowledge of the existence of the self, eternal and intrinsically distinct from the body, is got from statements like, 'Lo! This self is imperishable'. By serving the performance of action that yields other-worldly results, it [such knowledge] is associated, through implication, with sacred ritual action, just as knowledge of action [per se] is.[31]

Pārthasārathi has not conceded anything substantive by way of increasing the role of knowledge; it remains only a prerequisite for action, where that action has the highest good as its goal. But whereas we have previously seen Kumārila emphasize that action is the direct objective of knowledge, here Pārthasārathi points out that this does not mean that the highest good is not – indirectly – the objective of knowledge as well. He takes recourse in the distinction between knowledge generally directed at proper conduct (action per se), which may be thought to have nothing to do with

31 Pārthasārathi 1977, p. 281.

the highest good, and knowledge related to such ritual action as the Māmāṃsakas hold explicitly to lead to the highest good. In the latter instance, the implication of knowledge in the attainment of the highest good allows Mīmāṃsakas, facing (presumably Advaitic) questioning of their commitment to philosophical inquiry, to square their claim for the primacy of action with their acknowledgement of the transcendental significance of knowledge. In short, mirroring B4*:

> B2*: Weak subordination of knowledge restated (by Pārthasārathi): knowledge is still gained with action in mind, but because such action is efficacious towards the highest good, knowledge is the mediate – and therefore virtual – mode for the attainment of that good.

Pārthasārathi clearly feels it necessary to assimilate into his account the varied process of acquiring knowledge for the highest good, which must have gained much importance by his time through the work of Advaitins:

> Thus, that knowledge [of self, derived from the sacred texts] is for the sake of sacred ritual action, since it has visible utility. That [knowledge], again, which is of the nature of meditation and which is enjoined together with its auxiliaries (i.e. various mental virtues) are not visibly useful for sacred ritual action, since their fruit is invisible. In sequential passages, the invisible fruit is said to be of two types: of the form of prosperity and of the form of the highest good.[32]

Using the traditional distinction between action for the sake of the ritual (*kratvārtha*) and action for the sake of the person (*puruṣārtha*), he says that knowledge is initially useful when it is about the features of obligatory rituals and has the proper completion of the ritual itself as its outcome. But this does not exhaust all there is to the epistemic process. He recognizes that such things as 'meditation' (*upāsana*), which also relate to this process, cannot conceivably be related directly to ritual action. He argues that meditation – which seems here to be something like intense engagement with knowledge through contemplative practice – is exactly the sort of epistemic process that relates indirectly to a higher good such as prosperity, or even to the highest good. (Interestingly, he classifies the cultivation of mental virtues under knowledge, whereas we have seen Śaṅkara categorize it as practice. This says something about the persistent debate over the exact content of such processes in Indian thought.) Such forms of knowledge, says Pārthasārathi, are useful only in informing such action as has eventual consequences. It seems here that Pārthasārathi is willing to grant that knowledge is instrumental to a range of goods, so long as that instrumentality does not function autonomously of action.

So, the core argument between the two schools is not over whether action or right cognition is instrumental in the attainment of the human goal, but, given that both are needed, as to over which is dominant and which subordinate.

32 Ibid., p. 283.

Action and Knowledge in and for Liberation

We can now look much more specifically at this debate in the context of each school's conception of liberation as the highest good. In other words, I want now to see how the general concerns about the nature and significance of action and knowledge for its *telos* (howsoever specified) are manifested in the soteriological situation of each school. I not only want to show the historical specificity of the theoretical debate on knowledge and action, but also examine the way in which the general position on their relative importance coheres with the favoured conception of liberation.

Clearly, however, this chapter cannot become a detailed study of liberation in the two schools. I will therefore concentrate on the area where the conception of liberation meets the debate over action and knowledge, thereby allowing for an assessment of two different views on the ultimate consequences of knowledge.

Action and the Cessation of Action:The Complex Role of Action in Mīmāṃsā Liberation

Two different notions of action are involved in the Mīmāṃsā account of how the highest good is accomplished. The **cessation** of many sorts of actions is as important for the attainment of liberation as the **performance** of some other sorts of action. The idea that certain sorts of action must cease before liberation occurs is widespread in classical Indian thought. It does not represent, by itself, anything unique to Mīmāṃsā. But its presence in the system is interesting in two ways. First, it fits in an elegant manner into Mīmāṃsā's strict and bare conception of liberation. Secondly, it complexifies the Mīmāṃsā case for action as the dominant mode for the attainment of liberation, for the one notion of action seems to contradict directly the other.

In order to see all this, we must first understand what, in its relevant essentials, is Kumārila's conception of liberation.

> Nothing that is an effect (literally: has a cause) is known to be indestructible. Therefore, one is released only through the absence of the cause [of bondage] due to the destruction of consequential action. There is no cause for the eternality of liberation, apart from the absential (i.e. negative) nature of freedom …[33]

Kumārila draws on a general metaphysical principle. If a thing is created, it has a beginning; and if it has a beginning, it has an end; therefore, anything that is created eventually perishes. That which is created is an effect. If liberation were a particular state caused by prior conditions, then it is their product; it is an effect. If it is such a thing (or a state) with a beginning, then it must have an end, it must perish. But liberation is by definition something that does not end; if a state is one from which regression is possible, then it is not liberation. Liberation, therefore, cannot be caused by anything and it is not the effect of anything. What, then, is it? Kumārila answers obliquely: liberation is not bondage. Bondage is the continued presence of the self in a world of suffering, a presence which takes the form of embodied engagement – life – and repeats such engagement – a cycle of lives – in that world.

33 Kumārila, V.16.106–07a.

As long as there is bondage, there is no liberation. Therefore, bondage must stop. Now, bondage can indeed be stopped; there is nothing metaphysically problematic about that. But if there is no bondage, by definition there is liberation. Liberation is a result analytically, but not substantively. The metaphysical problem of liberation-as-effect is evaded. This is what Kumārila means by saying freedom is absential in nature: it is defined purely in terms of the absence of bondage.

Kumārila maintains that this absence is brought about through the destruction of consequential action (*karma*). We will turn to that in a moment. But first, we must note that such action happens in life or embodied existence; the body is the necessary condition for action, and the consequences accrue to the subject who, as agent, is indirectly connected to action through the body. Pārthasārathi helpfully spells this out in his comment on this verse:

> It is being said: Connection to body is bondage; its absence is liberation. Thus, the end of embodiment, its absence through complete annihilation and its future absence through non-production, is liberation. Bondage, conditioned by action, ceases only through the destruction of action …[34]

Liberation, the absence of bondage, embodiment and action are all therefore intimately connected. The self remains tied to existence because it has to meet the consequences of past actions, which have accrued to it. The performance of such action, the subsequent actions to expiate such consequences as possible, and experiencing those that cannot be so expiated, all require the body; and such embodied existence constitutes bondage. Embodied action (and there can be no other type) thus conditions bondage.

We can see here the emergence of the more complex attitude to action mentioned at the start of this section. While it is the Mīmāṃsā mode of attaining liberation, it is also the conditioning feature of bondage. There is, however, a deeply puzzling point here. Kumārila completes verse 107 with this statement:

> And no absence is the result of actions.

(More literally: ‘And no action renders any absence its fruit.’) Granted that Mīmāṃsā liberation is strictly only the absence of bondage; if it is not accomplished by any action at all, why has Kumārila expended so much energy on arguing that action is the dominant mode in the attainment of the highest good? After all, it is not as if he has merely argued that action is for the virtuous life and for prosperity, that is, for goods other than the highest. If he had, then he might have been able consistently to say that action falls short of accomplishing liberation, but no Advaitin would then have subsequently disagreed with him. It would seem that, as the next two verses demonstrate, he is focussed at this stage on only on all those actions that bind; in verses 110–11, he returns to action that does function towards liberation. If that is the case, then we should gloss the assertion above as referring to all but some special and especially efficacious actions, although this is only implicit in his statement.

34 Pārthasārathi 1978, p. 475.

Pārthasārathi, however, gives an interestingly different interpretation, influenced no doubt by his historically available knowledge of Advaita. After Kumārila has said that there can be no eternal liberation other than through the absential nature of freedom, he imagines that the opponent asks whether it cannot be that, even if it is of the form of absence, liberation is accomplished through cognition. He takes Kumārila's statement in 107b as being a response to that. That is to say, he interprets the word *kriyā* as action broadly conceived as some prosecuted means, so that gaining knowledge is understood as something the subject **does**. That allows for the argument that liberation does not occur through **doing** something such as gaining knowledge. Only by so collapsing the traditional distinction between knowledge and action – although, it must be admitted, with some appeal to our intuition about language – can he make this interpretation.

With the puzzle not entirely resolved, we turn now to the next sequence of Kumārila's thoughts, where the exact nature of the complex role of action – and, indeed, knowledge – in liberation is made clear.

> The fact is that for those who know the truth about the self, past actions are annihilated through fruition (the consequences having been met), and with there being no further residue [of consequences to be faced], the body is not produced again. Our body is produced for the experiencing of the consequences of past actions; if they (past actions) do not exist [any longer because they are exhausted] no body is then produced.[35]

Pārthasārathi helpfully reiterates, in his commentary on verse 108 that the 'truth about the self' is that it is distinct (*vivikta*) from the body.[36] This knowledge makes one disinterested (*virakta*) in the conjunction with the body (*dehasaṃprayoga*). Pārthasārathi seems to imply that this makes one see no point to acting to gain anything for oneself. What acts and what undergoes the consequences is the body, not the self; yet it is the self that motivates action and appropriates the consequences. When the distinction between them is realized, then the self finds no reason in indulging in consequential action.

Once the consequences are exhausted, and since by then the knowledgeable self has set aside any further consequential action, the need for the body, which alone acts and serves as the locus of (consequential) experience, is gone. Since bondage is embodiment, the end of the need for embodiment is the end of bondage. Thus there is liberation.

We have had to go through these moves because they detail the austere Mīmāṃsā conception of liberation. Seemingly against the tide of this chapter, we have seen the Mīmāṃsakas argue that liberation – the absentially defined notion of freedom that is the highest good, the supreme state – is accomplished through the cessation of bondage-conditioning action. We will now have to see the purpose behind Kumārila's assertion of the efficacy of action, for this in turn led to Advaitic counter-arguments for knowledge.

As the reader with some familiarity with Indian debates on the nature of *karma* will have expected, Kumārila distinguishes between different sorts of ritual actions:

35 Kumārila, V.16.108–09.

36 Ibid.

those which he conventionally argues must cease, and those which he asserts have functional efficacy towards liberation:

> One whose objective is liberation does not undertake actions which have the purpose of fulfilling desires or actions which are prohibited, but, performing only those actions which are necessary or occasion-specific, seeks to give up sin.[37]

The first two types of action – those that are directed towards goods other than the highest and those that are prohibited for being evil – must stop. In their different ways, they bring about consequences that, because they must be faced by the agent, perpetuate the need for embodiment. This much we have seen. The obvious and well-known problem is that this cannot result in the suspension of all action. In the specific Vedic context, rituals for the sustenance of order must be performed; more generally, such actions as helping others in trouble too must be performed. There are, therefore, obligatory actions, specifically categorized in the Vedic texts as those that have to be performed regularly, such as the oblation to the sun, and those that have to be performed at particular times in the passage of life, such as funerary rites. There is no loss of hermeneutical exactitude to see the mention of such actions more generally as covering core ethical demands.

The performance of these obligatory actions leads to the giving up of sin. There are two interpretations possible of how this can happen. The more obvious one is that the non-performance of obligatory action by itself is sinful. Intuitively, it would seem lunatic for those who consider themselves to be truly detached from the concerns of the world to refuse to save a drowning person because they did not wish to be rewarded for saving that person. The same would apply within the Vedic theory of action, for order would not be maintained without lives of proper ritual virtue. Another interpretation, secondary to the first, is that the painful consequences of past actions can only be expiated through subsequent virtuous conduct, ritual or ethical. Either way, or both ways, such actions fulfil the three functions required of them:

1. They acknowledge that life cannot be without action.
2. Their performance does not lead to continuing karmic consequentiality and (therefore) bondage.
3. Combining the implications of the first two functions, they show how action can and must serve as the dominant mode for the attainment of liberation.

This, then, is the conceptual reason for the Mīmāṃsaka's sustained argument for action. The actions that function towards liberation are those that expiate bondage-perpetuating consequentiality and fulfil obligations whose non-observance would once more generate consequentiality.

The account needs a final tidying up. The performance of obligatory actions may have the purely negative functions of expiation and the avoidance of the sins of non-performance; but what of their positive function? As Pārthasārathi expresses the familiar worry, in his introduction to verse 111, such obligatory actions as the

37 Ibid., V.16.110.

agnihotra ritual are for the purpose of attaining heaven; but this is merely some further experiential state; how then can there be liberation? Kumārila provides an answer that seems conventional to us:

> It is known that the effects [of the latter two sorts] accrue only to those who solicit them, and not to those who do not desire them.[38]

This is the claim central to the teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* and as such well-known in later Hindu religio-moral thought. It is not clear whether Kumārila is explicitly referring to it; he would probably have known it, but it may only just have been emerging as an authoritative text in his time. Pārthasārathi, five centuries or so later, takes the commonality of concern to be obvious; commenting on this verse, he quotes Kṛṣṇa on the adept or the renunciate who is assured of liberation as 'one who performs action indifferent to the fruit of action' (*Bhagavadgītā*, VI.1). The major conceptual problem here, into which we cannot possibly go, is that a general moral claim – that intention is central to the (dis)value of action – is imported into the apparently factual claim that there is a real nomology of action and consequence in the cosmos.[39] Since this idea is accepted by the Advaitin, it is not in contention. Given this acceptance, Kumārila's account of how action leads to liberation according to his conception of it is complete.

Knowledge and the Transcendence of Action in Advaita

Depending on one's judgement, Advaitic liberation is easily conceptualized or virtually impossible to do so; I incline towards holding the latter but feel impelled, in the present context, to behave as if it were the former.

Without attempting to analyse or defend in any detail the Advaitic conception of liberation, I shall now present its general features. The person who seeks liberation is the subject which has the reflexive ascription of its identity determined by its mental and physical apparatus. The consciousness individuated by the psychophysical complex is called the *jīva*. However, consciousness as a general type of existent, which has the unique character of being intrinsically reflexive (i.e. constituted by the nature of having its functioning transparently available to itself – see Chapter 2 of this volume), is not to be understood as naturally individuated. In its nature as this 'luminous' (i.e. reflexively aware) and general existent, it is found as the subject(ivity) of all individuals and is called the *ātman*. Consciousness as this general entity is also called 'witness' (*sākṣin*), because it is reflexively transparent towards all particular and specifiable states of awareness. The person is at once the specific

38 Ibid., V.16.111a.

39 For a lucid account, combining historical sensitivity with philosophical re-interpretation, on the nature of *karma*, its supposed claim to factuality and its possible moral role, with specific reference to the *Bhagavadgītā*, see Perrett 1998, especially Ch. 1 and Ch. 4.

locus of consciousness, conditioned by states (of bodily and mental) awareness and the contingent manifestation of this general, 'witnessing' consciousness.[40]

The astonishing claim of Advaita is that this general type of consciousness is, irreducibly and ultimately, a general yet singular consciousness. It is this which is the source, in some way (often contested within Advaita itself) of the world. This foundational nature is indicated by the name given to it, *brahman*, from the root word meaning 'to grow', for the world is an evolute (again, in some way) of *brahman*. This cosmogonic claim is, according to the Advaitin, the way to understand the insight of the Upaniṣadic seers: the individuated subject, by virtue of consciousness, **is** the universal, supporting consciousness. All that remains, philosophically, is to clarify the nature of the identity postulated here …

The existential consequence of this insight, of course, is that liberation has to be the de-individuation of consciousness. That is to say, it is the occurrence within the individual subject's consciousness of an awareness of universality which results in that consciousness ceasing to have its ascriptive individuality and re-attaining its undifferentiated existence as universal consciousness.

The main reason for the Advaitic rejection of the ultimate efficacy of ritual action, however, lies in a further metaphysical move. The ultimacy of *brahman* is interpreted by them to mean that the world is not irreducibly separate or separable from it. Its ontological status is not considered co-eval with its source. The non-duality that gives 'A-dvaita' its name is both between *brahman* and the individual conscious beings and between *brahman* and the non-conscious world; it is their inner being (*antarbhāvaḥ*)[41] and there is nothing but it in the final analysis. As one would expect, this dramatically expressed monism is qualified in many (sometimes incompatible) ways by Śaṅkara and his successors, so as to save the stubborn appearance of various phenomena of duality and difference. For example, later in the same commentary, he admits (or, perhaps, asserts) that all phenomenal things (*vastvantara*) in this world that are not ultimately real exist both for those who do know that there is nothing other than *brahman* and those who do not so know.[42] His critique of the Yogācāra denial of the external world too is well known.[43]

Why is this deliberate advocacy of an indeterminate status to the world of relevance to the Advaitic rejection of action as the dominant means for the attainment of liberation? Śaṅkarạ argues that action, howsoever virtue-directed, is nevertheless metaphysically incapable of achieving for the subject that transcendence which the Advaitin calls liberation:

> 'Now, liberation is the goal of man; it may be [thought to be] attained through effort (i.e. action). As merit from action increases, so too do the results obtained. Thus, it might be presumed that an increase in the best of meritorious action would lead to liberation.' This idea should be discarded. Even the best of actions, combined [though it may be] with

40 See Vācaspati on the nature of witness in Vācaspati 1917, I.i.4 (all references to Vācaspati are to this work). For contemporary explorations, see Chatterjee and Dravid 1979; Fort 1984.

41 For example, Śaṅkara 1914, II.iv.9, p. 348.

42 Ibid., III.v.1, p. 452.

43 For an analytic reconstruction, see Ram-Prasad 2002a, Section 1.

> (right) cognition, can only go so far. Action and its results have as their locus the manifold [world] of names and forms. Action does not function with regard to that which is not an effect (of any action), is eternal, whole (literally, unmanifold), beyond name and form, and exclusive of the nature of action, its factors and its results. And where it does function, it is only in the [unliberated existence of the] cycle of lives …[44]

The objection he puts in his interlocutor's mouth is odd for two reasons. First, if this is a Mīmāṃsaka (who else could it be?), they is hardly likely to put it forward. We have seen that Mīmāṃsakas are quite clear that action relates to the attainment of liberation only indirectly, by removing the need for bondage. They would not naively hold liberation to be the culminating good fortune of good actions. Liberation cannot be an effect if it is to be eternal, so it must be defined purely in absential terms; the absence is that of experience, which is always binding; but the accretion of merit requires the experience of those meritorious consequences; therefore liberation, as the cessation of experience, cannot be the result of meritorious actions. Śaṅkara must be aware of this argument.

The choice of the question is odd is another way: the response – which is obviously meant to express the Advaitic position here – does not directly bear on the question. Even if there were an interlocutor who put that question, the response would have to deal with how actions that accrue merit are inappropriate for liberation; but that would only be to rehearse the Mīmāṃsā case. When Śaṅkara says that actions can only go so far, he is not talking at all about the nature of actions. He is talking about the nature of the world in which those actions take place. The question he is really answering is as to whether there is any sort of action at all – whether meritorious in consequence or only negating consequences – which can be a direct means to liberation. Then the answer is that there is none, for the most general reason possible: actions are part of the world whose transcendence precisely is Advaitic liberation.

This strategy reveals a fundamental difficulty: Advaitins must reconcile a radical concept of liberation that rejects Vedic ritual by calling for it to be transcended with a conservative acknowledgement of the significance of Vedic orthopraxy. In response, Advaitins tend to assert the general metaphysical principle that the world of action is transcended by knowledge in and of *brahman* even while they engage in debates over the specific potency of ritual action. Thus, for example, Sureśvara, in his early post-Śaṅkara composition, the *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*, uses a metaphor to make the metaphysical point:

> Since liberation arises only from the destruction of miscognition, action does not lead to it. Action cannot remove miscognition, anymore than can darkness arising from darkness [remove darkness].[45]

Liberation results when the individual subject realizes that its consciousness is not different from the singular yet general consciousness from which all experienced reality derives. The de-individuation of consciousness, upon the attainment of the knowledge that it had mistaken its individuated identity, is Advaitic liberation.

44 Śaṅkara 1914, III.iii.1, p. 421.

45 Sureśvara 1988, I.24, p. 37.

Sureśvara here goes back to the old consensus that action and knowledge are mutually without influence. Given the cognitive content of Advaitic liberation, if follows that no action can affect it.

Having made this highly general metaphysical point, however, Sureśvara too engages in the debate on the types and functions of ritual action.

> Since they are declared to be for the consumption of our previous sins, imperative daily acts are not liberating. Since they are associated with such fruit as the celestial world and the like, neither [likewise] are acts of choice [liberating] ... The avoidance of [both] prohibited acts and those of choice is preached by both of us; and since imperative acts do not produce [fresh] fruit, liberation is not achieved through action.[46]

He employs the conventional division of actions. Certain daily rituals that sustain the correctly lived life and acts of duty determined by caste, position, relationship and, ultimately, one's humanity, all have to be carried out in any case, if one is to live the virtuous life. They have intrinsic merit. But a virtuous life is one lived for the sake of good alone. It is not to do with any further consideration, like the accumulation of merit for the agent. The only consequence of virtuous action for the agent is that it counteracts the consequences of past actions. Since virtuous action is an end in itself, it cannot be instrumental to something else, including liberation. Liberation, of course, is conceived as the (re)attainment of universal consciousness. But there is the rub. Mīmāṃsakas conceive of liberation absentially, strictly as the end of the cycle of lives. They would protest that it was perfectly natural to suppose that the virtuous life – which allowed good deeds but did not commit the agent to further consequentiality – was the prerequisite for liberation. As for acts of choice, made with the attainment of an end in view, the Mīmāṃsakas themselves have stated that these might produce a comfortable, celestial existence but not liberation; so that is not an issue. In other words, the repeated Advaitic argument against the liberating efficacy of obligatory actions is of no intrinsic value against the Mīmāṃsaka; it comes down to the different conceptions of liberation involved.

The Advaitic rejection of the functionality of action towards liberation, then, is intimately related to the conception of liberation itself. The metaphysics implied by that conception denies the possibility of action having a role. However, the ironic feature of the Advaitic critique of the liberating functionality of action is that that critique applies to cognitive functioning as well. If liberation is transcendence of the world, and action is contained within that transcended world, so too is cognition. Indeed, that is a central contention of Advaita.[47]

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46 Ibid. I. 26, p. 39; I.28, p. 42.

47 Curiously, Śaṅkara 1917, I.i.4 quotes Gotama's *Nyāya Sūtra*, I.i.2, apparently to support his contention that knowledge is the means to the highest end. 'Of suffering, birth, activity, defects and erroneous cognition, by the destruction of each subsequent one there occurs the destruction of the earlier one, and consequently, there is the final release'. Śaṅkara then says: 'And the destruction of erroneous cognition results from the knowledge of the oneness of *brahman* and self.' In the *Bhāmatī* commentary on this passage, Vācaspati cautiously glosses this passage thus: 'The citation of the aphorism is only for this purpose: that through true cognition erroneous cognition is removed; that, however, which

> 'I am *brahman*': in this alone do terminate all injunctions and all other means of knowledge. When the understanding of the non-dual self, which cannot be subtracted from or added to, is real, that which is without object and without knower themselves are entitled to become means of knowledge.[48]

That is to say, the very conditions under which the system of knowledge operates cease to hold.[49] What we call knowledge is bounded by the very world which is transcended. Vācaspati makes this explicit in his commentary:

> By the word 'this' (in 'in this alone do …'), he refers to cognition. Injunctions are, indeed, the means for knowing about virtuous conduct. And these, which are premised on differences of end, means and mode of operation, and give rise to virtuous conduct cannot, when there is oneness of *brahman* and the self, be based on those [differences]; for that would be contradictory. This is the sense [of Śaṅkara's argument]. This is not what happens just to the sacred teachings that are the means for knowing virtuous conduct, but to all the means of knowledge … In non-duality, the object–subject relationship does not, indeed, exist; nor too agency, as there is no action; nor too instrumentality, for the same reason.[50]

With characteristic clarity, Vācaspati points out that the argument against action extends to knowledge. The relevant action is that which is performed by following what the texts enjoin. But to do that is to know the texts that are the source of knowledge (of enjoined virtuous action, described self, and indicated *brahman*). Knowledge, however, requires the structure of experience, of subject and object, subjective apparatus and objective features. These are exactly what are penultimate and transcended when the self de-individuates its consciousness back into the consciousness of *brahman*.

The Advaitin maintains that there nevertheless is a difference in functionality between action and knowledge. Action remains **within** the unliberated existence of the world, which is structured by subject–object duality; it therefore provides no

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is acceptable to Akṣapāda [Gotama] as true cognition is not acceptable here.' (Vācaspati, I.i.4, p. 121).

48 Śaṅkara, I.i.4, p. 154.

49 Śaṅkara repeatedly returns to this, a *leitmotif* of his system. Much later in the text, he interprets a truly enigmatic aphorism in this way; but by then, we have become exceedingly familiar with this theme, and the commentary on this aphorism hardly introduces a new thought. 'True cognition of that [universal supporting consciousness] does not impel action; on the contrary, it uproots all works; this will be stated in the aphorism, 'and thus destruction' (III.iv.16) (BSB, III.iv.8, pp. 873–4). Coming to that aphorism itself, he says, 'Moreover, it is declared that the essential form of the entire phenomenal world that is caused by primal misunderstanding, and characterized by act, instrument and consequence that provide the competence for works, is destroyed by knowledge: 'But when to one all has become just the self, what and by what does one see, what and by what does one smell?' (*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* II.iv.4) But for one who expects to attain competence for action through the prior [true] cognition of self [learnt] from the Vedānta, the consequence will only be the utter destruction of all competence for action. Thus too is knowledge autonomous', III.iv.16, p. 876.

50 Vācaspati, I.i.4, p. 154.

way of getting the subject to transcend its individuated separation from *brahman*. Knowledge, in contrast, does take the subject into transcendence, because it is self-transcending. Quite how this is so is a matter of intense debate. In a dense and intricate passage, Vācaspati presents the Advaitic account of how knowledge is liberating, although it is itself transcended in liberation:

> Hence it is stated that the internal organ, matured through the contemplation of the meaning of the unquestionable assertions, manifests the immediately experienced referent of the 'you' as having the referent 'that', through denying the various contingent aspects of the former. But this is not experience of the nature of *brahman* itself, for then it could not even be generated; rather, it is a particular mental state, having *brahman* as its content … Nor is the direct apprehension (intuition) of *brahman* through a mental state free from all contingent features, for it [that apprehension] is known to be a contingency incompatible with both itself and other contingent features, itself being on the brink of destruction …[51]

This shows why, in an important sense, liberation is not in any obvious sense a state of knowledge in Advaita. Knowledge, whether episodic or dispositional, is effected through the physical apparatus of the body, and is the content of a specifiable cognitive state or set of states; but it must be noted that both body and mind are individuating for Advaita. If liberation is de-individuation of consciousness back into *brahman*, it is what can only indicatively be called a state of consciousness, for all consciousness that we – individuated beings – are conscious of is revealed only in and as states individuated by the body. However, the realization of the unindividuated nature of that consciousness which we have hitherto taken as being limited to us is a special state of knowledge. It prompts the cessation of individuation, since it removes the misunderstanding about consciousness that, the Advaitin says, consciousness has imposed primally upon itself. It is therefore the last individuated state. As such, it too is part of the transcended world, but it has functional efficacy towards transcendence. Knowledge becomes self-denying, since its occurrence destroys just those contingent features of individuation that made it possible to occur in the first place.

Given the Advaitic conception of liberation, action, clearly, does not have this feature. At most, even if it is accepted that obligatory action exhausts consequentiality, the last such act could not have this ability to take the subject into the transcendental state.

There are two possible Mīmāṃsā responses to this Advaitic claim that knowledge in uniquely self-denying in the attainment of liberation. One is direct and seeks to controvert the Advaitic claim to the special nature of liberating knowledge (the knowledge, after all, with which the Advaitin is ultimately concerned). Pārthasārathi does this by refusing to accept that liberating cognition has the special self-destructive feature that we have seen Vācaspati argues for:

> With the free self, the overruling cognition cannot even be imagined, as he is in a condition of insensibility towards all the sensory apparatus, and in the absence of that apparatus, cognition is impossible. Negation of the unrecollected manifold cannot be thought of.

51 Ibid., I.i.1, pp. 57–8.

> Nor is recollection possible in that state, as all memory-traces would have been removed. Therefore, the overruling cognition could not possibly occur.[52]

He seems to impute to the Advaitins the view that the transcendence of the world is itself the content of a cognition in liberation. This allows him to argue that no such state is possible, requiring as it does just the psychophysical complex of the body that is supposed be transcended. It would seem that, in this case, the Advaitin, or at least, Vācaspati, wins out, for the transcendence of the world is a fact of de-individuation, not a veridical cognition within a de-individuated state of being. But I cannot pretend that the complexity of the arguments for and against have been explored fully here.

The other Mīmāṃsā strategy is to criticize the Advaitic conception of liberation, which, after all, is what legitimizes the Advaitic rejection of the ultimate efficacy of action. But a study of that is beyond the purview of this examination.[53]

Conclusion

From what we have seen, we may conclude that there are many interesting conceptual issues about the nature of action and knowledge, and their relationship. These may be extended to apply to more general philosophical considerations.[54, 55] The real

52 Pārthasārathi 1977, pp. 110–11.

53 For a detailed examination of both conceptions of liberation amongst others, see Ram-Prasad 2001.

54 There is a philosophical tradition in the modern West, which claims to be heir to the classical Greek tradition, which seeks to use philosophy to transform our ordinary and problematic existence into a properly lived one. The differences in orientation and outcome, compared to the situation we are studying, are intriguing. For example, Alisdair MacIntyre asks for knowledge that revises our ordinary preferences in motivation and behaviour; such revision for him is premised on a tension between a life of ordinary preferences and the principles given by some religiously authoritative source (McIntyre 1981, 1988). Hence, his end is one that is secured by a return to some harmony-yielding principles of behaviour. To that extent, then, his pattern of reasoning is like the Mīmāṃsaka's, who wants philosophical knowledge to be utilized to motivate a life of proper action according to authoritative Vedic injunctions (which are much more specific, of course, than any general principles of action).

55 There is potential for some directly comparativist study of this debate and that within Neoplatonism. I shall not labour the point about the scope for comparison. The Neoplatonists functioned within a 'locative' view of existence, to use Jonathan Z. Smith's notion (Smith 1978, pp. 88–103). In it, there is a cosmic order, an order that is the world of the gods, an order which is reflected in human society; and the chief duty of priests and kings is to 'attune human order' to the world of the gods. But Plotinus denied that the soul ever descended into a real world; and called sensible matter the cause of the soul's confusion about itself. The cosmos was then devalued, and 'this, in turn, denied the value of religious rituals tied to the rhythms of the sensible world' (Shaw 1995, p. 11). In contrast, Iamblichus took it that the 'task of every soul was to partake in divine mimesis by creating a cosmos' (Shaw 1995, p. 15). Iamblichus's metaphysics revolved around a 'completely descended soul', that is, of a soul located in a real world. This served to justify his practice of theurgic rituals.

historical arguments, however, seem to run in a circle, in which the conception of liberation determines the position on action and knowledge, and vice versa.

Plotinus' rejection of ritual practices reflected his view of the soul as 'undescended', that is, not located in a real world (Lloyd 1967, pp. 287–93). The devil is in the detail; it is of little use merely to point out apparent parallels while ignoring the very real historical and contextual differences. I do not mean to suggest that the need is for comparison as such. Rather, it would be interesting to see how different philosophical cultures have handled the issue of the interrelationship between ritual action, human agency and the metaphysical status of the world. This may show something significant about how humans have attempted to respond through symbolism and other abstract means to their perception of their place in an immensely larger whole.

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Chapter 4

Liberation without Annihilation: Pārthasārathi Miśra on *Jñānaśakti*

In the previous chapter, we saw the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsaka argue tenaciously for the dominance of action as the primary mode of liberation, while Pārthasārathi Miśra nuanced the school's position in the face of developments in Advaita Vedānta. The key challenge lies in the Mīmāṃsaka response to the Advaitin argument that liberation is cognitive (the re-attainment of universal consciousness), even if beyond the epistemic limit of knowledge. In presenting an absential conception of liberation as strictly limited to the cessation of experience, the Mīmāṃsakas face a problem. The problem is simply put, for all that it concerns the ultimate end. If there is liberation for the self (*ātman*), and it consists in freedom from **all** the conditions of bondage including body, relationality and the rest, then since awareness – occurrent through the sensory apparatus of the body – is part of that bondage, it too must go; but then, how is liberation different from the annihilation of that self? I want in the next few pages to focus narrowly on Pārthasārathi's suggestion as to how the self's state in liberation must be understood as a real, non-annihilatory state of being that is nevertheless without any consciousness.

Kumārila and the Non-cognitive Conception of Liberation

Kumārila introduces a systematic conception of liberation quite absent in Jaimini's original *Mīmāṃsa-sūtra* and even in Śabara's 5th-century *Bhāṣya*. Liberation is the absence of the causes of embodiment. The causes are actions directed at the world and the consequences of those actions that must be met eventually. If there were no actions that led to worldly consequences, there would be no ties to this world and the cycle of lives. Liberation cannot be anything other – or more – than this cessation of ties. So liberation is understood by Kumārila to mean the end of all consequences (to the agent) of action. Liberation is strictly the absence of the action–consequence nexus (*karma*), which is the mark of the unliberated self.

> Nothing that is an effect (literally: has a cause) is known to be indestructible. Therefore, one is released only through the absence of the cause [of bondage] due to the destruction of consequential action. There is no cause for the eternality of liberation, apart from the absential (i.e. negative) nature of freedom …[1]

1 Kumārila 1978, V.16.106–07a.

Kumārila here calls upon a metaphysical principle – nothing that is caused, nothing that is an effect or product, can be eternal – to argue for his negative conception of liberation. Liberation is not an effect brought about or caused by anything, for if it were, it would be a product and therefore perishable. Liberation merely is the logically equivalent term for the cessation of bondage. The cessation of bondage is not metaphysically problematic; it is simply the end of productive action.

This is a severe and minimalist position, and the metaphysical principle involved could be the subject of analysis. My aim here, however, is not to explore the reasoning behind this Mīmāṃsā conception of liberation but to grant its coherence and examine Pārthasārathi's attempt to cope with its implications.

Pārthasārathi's reasoning in support of the austere and non-cognitive conception of liberation utilizes the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā view of the necessary role of the psychophysical apparatus in experience:

> The world binds the man in three ways: through the body which is the home of enjoyment, [through] the senses which are the means of enjoyment and [through] the objects – like sound and so on – which are enjoyed. Enjoyment is that which has happiness and suffering as its objects, and it is said to be immediate experience. Thus, liberation is the permanent dissolution of these three bonds. What is this permanent dissolution? It is the destruction of the already existing body, senses and objects, and the non-origination of that which has not already arisen. How does this permanent non-origination come about? Through the utter extinction of virtue and vice that are the originators [of bondage]. Thus, bondage is being bound to the world and liberation is liberation from it.[2]

Liberation is from the conditions of embodiment, and cognition is possible only when embodied, so liberation cannot include any cognition. Pārthasārathi is motivated by the defence of this claim in his tight and sustained argument against the Advaitic notion that the content of liberation is given by blissful awareness. He concludes that the proper interpretation of Mīmāṃsā liberation is an absential one:

> His [Kumārila's] doctrine is in the statement of [the] absential nature [of liberation] alone … It is not possible for the freed one to experience bliss, for there are no organs. Could it be said that the mind exists? No, as the sacred text says of mindlessness, 'Without mind, without speech'.[3]

Incidentally, it must be noted that later Mīmāṃsakas, perhaps influenced by the general drift towards Vedāntically inspired systematization of *bhakti* or devotional religion, utterly re-interpret Kumārila. They assert without much ado, when they do deal with liberation, that it is a state of bliss. Thus, the composite 16th-century work attributed to Nārāyaṇa has this to say of liberation:

> The followers of Kumārila hold that freedom is the enjoyment, through the mind, of the bliss that abides in the self, when suffering has been utterly removed.[4]

2 Pārthasārathi 1977, p. 265.
3 Ibid., p. 268.
4 Nārāyaṇa 1933, p. 212.

Nārāyaṇa insists thereafter that this natural bliss is not experienced in life because it requires the mind to exist without the body, the senses, and so on. Clearly, some considerable distance has opened between this work and Kumārila's of a thousand years before.

To return to Pārthasārathi: he unwaveringly denies all cognitive content to liberation, arguing that it is precisely the removal of all the conditions under which there can be bliss, or any other state of awareness, that constitutes liberation. Now, I will not examine one other worry for the Mīmāṃsā conception of liberation in detail because it is about the psychology of motivation and not about the issue on hand. The Mīmāṃsakas usually face the Advaitic objection that liberation could not provide motivation as a human goal if it did not consist in some such state as bliss or exalted happiness (*ānanda*). The strictly absential notion of liberation would utterly fail to move humans to seek it. Pārthasārathi attempts to meet this worry by analysing the nature of human motivation, and argues that happiness in fact is not the prime motivator that his opponent takes it to be. The main issue for Pārthasārathi, then, is to meet the worry that liberation, as he understands it, would be no different from annihilation.

In brief, Pārthasārathi's solution is to claim that, while the self is not conscious in liberation, it has cognitive potency (*jñānaśakti*); this potency could not be there if the self was not, and therefore, the self in the non-cognitive state of liberation is not itself non-existent (i.e. annihilated).

The Idea of Newly Created Potential for Future Consequences

Pārthasārathi's development of the idea of cognitive potency in fact derives from the well-established and crucial Mīmāṃsā idea that ritual action creates and stores up the potential for eventual consequences for the agent of action. In order to situate his innovative use of the concept of cognitive potency in the context of non-cognitive liberation, I will examine as briefly as possible, the original and well-known Mīmāṃsā idea of '*apūrva*', from which he explicitly derives '*jñānaśakti*'.

The Mīmāṃsaka sets out to identify the mechanism that would guarantee the relationship between ritual-moral actions (such as sacrifices) and their consequences (such as heaven). He wants to defend his claim that the injunctions of the Vedas to ritual action must be followed because they extract conformity between action and consequence.

Śabara and, after him, Kumārila, take recourse to the notion of *apūrva*. This literally means 'unprecedented'. In Jaimini's original use of it, it is nothing more than that which is new at the commencement of a ritual action. Śabara proceeds to develop this bare notion:[5]

> [*Sūtra*:] '[There is] injunctive power, because there is recommencement' (2.1.5) [Commentary:] We call injunctive power itself the extraordinary potential. Extraordinary potential is that which comes into existence anew. Such commencement is taught in [such

5 For a rigorous and intricate study of Śabara's and Kumārila's development of Jaimini's originally simple use of the term, see Clooney 1990, Ch. VII.

> texts as] 'if desirous of heaven, one should perform sacrifice'. Otherwise (if there were no such thing as extraordinary potential), such an instruction would be meaningless. The sacrifice itself decays, so that if the sacrifice were to perish without bringing about something else, then with the determinate cause not existing, the result [like heaven] too could never exist. From this it follows that something is brought into existence [by the sacrifice]. It may be thought that on the strength of the declaration of a certain result following from a certain sacrificer, the act of sacrifice itself does not perish (but persists until the result). But this [thought] is useless. We never get at the act in any other form (than the perishable, temporal one).[6]

Typically, the aphorism is enigmatic. Śabara draws his favoured meaning out of it. He takes 'recommencement' (*punarārambaḥ*) to be the new and specific re-starting – upon the performance of particular acts – of the potential for consequences. While an agent may have accrued the potential for ill consequences through indulging in acts prohibited by the sacred text, a proper act thereafter will carry its own potential for good consequences. These latter will counter or even cancel the consequences of the former act. The potential for any specific act is newly created upon the performance of that act. That is what Śabara takes 'recommencement' to mean.

The more complex interpretation is of 'injunctive power' (*codana*) as implying the unprecedented or the 'extraordinary potential' (*apūrvaṃ*). The unprecedented is that which is created when there is a ritual or moral action. Śabara identifies the **potential** for consequences with the power of the texts to enjoin actions with guaranteed results. The performance of a ritual leads to a desirable consequence after life. The potential for specific consequences of that act must be brought into existence because, while consequences for the agent do not follow immediately from these acts, nonetheless they must follow at some time. After all, the Vedas assert that they do. And where the Vedas do not specify the consequence, surely it cannot be the ashes of the sacrifice that alone provide the perceptible result of the ritual. This is what sustains the necessary relationship between a ritual act and the consequence guaranteed by the Vedas, even when there is an intervening period when the consequence is not realized. For the Mīmāṃsakas, this is neither idle speculation nor an expression of a hope, but a nomological statement; but, we must conclude, one based on faith alone.[7]

The consequence simply – and eventually – follows when an agent performs the ritual action. In this, the ritual connection parallels physical laws, such as 'bruising happens to the body if it falls' (note that I am not wandering into the issue of whether these laws embody necessary or contingent truths; that does not seem to have been a distinction of much concern to the classical Indian philosophers). It is intrinsic to the nature of ritual action that, upon its performance, this extraordinary potential comes into being. As Kumārila puts it in his development of Śabara's idea:

6 Śabara 1978, 2.1.5, p. 366.

7 Clooney points out that the idea of potency, despite the claim that it is established by presumptive testimony and therefore validly established, is really based on faith; ultimately, presumption from the sacred text depends on nothing but commitment to the truth of the Vedas (ibid., p. 227).

> We call it 'extraordinary potential' that fitness (*yogya*) in the principal action or the person which comes of a prior action, a fitness that is duly derived from sacred teachings.[8]

The proper functioning of the principal action in a ritual manifests itself in the potential for eventual fructification of the consequences of that action. The proper endowment of the agent of that action is the potential for meeting those consequences.

There must be recourse to extraordinary potential: this alone can explain the difference between merely physical consequences and the ritual-moral consequences of sacrifices. If there is a sacrificial fire, then the smoke from it occurs at that time; in contrast, the purificatory consequence, which the agent is Vedically guaranteed to enjoy, could happen after this life. As Śabara points out, the sacrifice itself cannot persist until its ritual-moral consequences are realized. Extraordinary potential is what makes 'action at a distance' possible.

The Mīmāṃsakas combine a sceptical modesty about knowledge of the physical world ('we never get at the act in any other form') which rejects anything that is not available to the senses with a bold acceptance of suprasensory forces, so long as that acceptance is rooted in the requirements of the sacred text. But perhaps this is not so indefensible. The Mīmāṃsakas argue that an appeal to an unseen force alone can explain how the Vedas are guarantors of appropriate consequences. I will return to this in a moment when I deal with Pārthasārathi's postulation of *śakti*. But first, we must also note that Kumārila argues that the authority of the Vedas is itself available to our examination. His explicit claim regarding the veracity of Vedic statements is this:

> Here, as always, nothing is asked for which is not directly seen.[9]

The working of the Vedas presents itself to our scrutiny; that is simply a matter for investigation. Actually, bold though this is, Kumārila cannot help himself to it, for on the crucial matter of what the Vedic injunctions guarantee, he himself has said that the extraordinary potential which ritual actions create is unseen. Still, this is, as it were, rock bottom for the Mīmāṃsakas; at this point, there is no more philosophy, only a simple appeal to what actually happens (or, their opponents will say, what they claim happens). The limits of knowledge are presented here.

Kumārila also points that that the distinction between the seen and unseen consequences is more than merely to do with the temporal gap between some acts and their ordinary, if slowly realized, consequences:

> Even in the ordinary world, the results of actions such as farming, drinking clarified butter or studying come forth only after a while. Inasmuch as it is not possible for them to persist in that manner, it must be thought that they persist through some subtle influence. However, as these [actions] are not Vedic, the subtle influence [that they generate] is not considered to be extraordinary potential.[10]

8 Kumārila 1986, II.1.5, vol. II, p. 345.
9 Kumārila 1978, II.99.
10 Kumārila 1986, II.1.5, vol. II, p. 346.

(Drinking clarified butter was a ritual act supposedly performed by a certain class of sages, for purificatory purposes.) Even studying takes a while for its results (one hopes) to show; in that sense, the act of studying too might be thought to have the potential to make the student learned. And seeds have the potential to ripen into corn. Kumārila clarifies that what makes for extraordinary potential is not the fact of its occurring only in non-immediate connections, but the fact of its occurring only in Vedically relevant actions.

Pārthasārathi, however, wants to generalize the claim to potency; he wants it to be a feature of reality. In the course of his defence of the Mīmāṃsā claim that 'presumption' (*arthāpatti*) is an independent means of knowledge, he claims that it is possible to establish the causal connection between a seed and the sprout only through the presumption that the seed has a potency – *śakti* – to produce the sprout. The conclusion that the seed can produce a sprout is not established through repeated investigation of seeds and sprouts; rather, it is contained in the very structure of the concept of a seed. And that concept contains in it the element of the potency of the seed to sprout, for otherwise, we could not be said to possess the concept of the seed at all. He then feels it necessary to argue for the existence of such a potency.

> When the seeds exist, it is seen that the sprouts come up, when not, they are seen not to; so, we arrive at the conclusion that the seeds are the cause of the sprouts. Even if they exist, if the seeds are smelt by rats, they cease to cause sprouting (literally: become non-causes of sprouting). The concept of potency settles the issue of this incompatibility between the [seeds] being the cause and not being the cause. So, the idea is that there is a supra-sensory feature; the sprouts come up if it is present, and if it is destroyed through rats smelling it, they do not come up.[11]

The key idea here is that potency is not established by empirical investigation (i.e. sensory tests). It is supra-sensory in the sense that it is simply contained within the very concept of the seed possessed by us. The only empirical input we have is the presence of seeds and the presence of sprouts at different times and stages of growth. But the connection between them – namely, the potency of the seed to become, in causally sustainable circumstances, a sprout – is a conceptual mapping that is not itself gained through the senses. In order to provide a satisfactory account of what is available in our experience, we have to take recourse in things that lie beyond that experience. This is probably the best way of understanding the nature of presumption: as a having to go beyond the senses in order to know something about what is within their grasp; and thereby grasp them. (The Naiyāyikas, against whom these arguments are directed, were reluctant to accept this shifting of the borders of the graspable, and endeavoured to explain connections purely through the empirical investigation of inferential procedures.) Pārthasārathi, then, claims that only if there were potency, which is not sensed, could there be the sprouting of plants from seeds, which process is within our sensory grasp.

The example is not entirely plausible, since it may be a hostage to the discoveries of biology. If, on the other hand, it is said in his defence that the actual biological process merely describes what happens physically and chemically, but does not

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11 Pārthasārathi 1977, p. 151.

explain why that process has that effect (rather than some other), postulating potency does not take us very far. But the core philosophical notion still seems worthwhile: it may be required to accept within any explanation of what is available to the senses some factor that is beyond it but whose conceptual rationale makes it the only explanation possible. Indeed, we could even say that, since postulation is part of the structure of reasoning even while directed towards matters of the senses, it guarantees knowledge in a way an inference, which is dependent on the deliverances of the senses, cannot. Of course, the problem for the Mīmāṃsaka is that an opponent may argue that potency is not part of their conceptual repertoire at any rate, and therefore it does not have the inexorable thrust of logic that the Mīmāṃsaka claims. We can think back to the idea of postulation explored in Chapter 2 of this book: Caitra is alive and not in the house; therefore it is concluded that he is elsewhere. Here, Caitra's presence elsewhere is not a matter for empirical investigation but structurally contained in the idea of a living but absent man. This is part of the conceptual repertoire of everyone, and the Mīmāṃsaka's opponent has to find some other way of saying Caitra's presence is indeed an inference to be arrived at through empirical investigation. But with potency, the opponent can simply say that it is not self-evidently part of everyone's conceptual repertoire: others can understand about rituals and consequences without granting potency.

Pārthasārathi, then, explicitly links this idea of potency with the traditional Mīmāṃsā doctrine of the unprecedented, the extraordinary potential:

> The concept of potency in oblation, the extraordinary potential for securing heaven and the like, must be granted … It resides in the self … And the potency, [otherwise] called extraordinary potential, being located [initially] in the oblation, does not, upon the oblation perishing, secure the consummation of heaven; so it must be presumed to be located in the agent … This [understanding] is generally accepted. Even after some time has elapsed since the oil has been drunk, it is normal for people to say, 'I have become strong and healthy'.[12]

So, Pārthasārathi is arguing, contra Kumārila, that the connection given by potency is the same in both ordinary and Vedic cases of temporal gaps between actions and consequences. Again, the example is unconvincing because of a reductive study of whether oil does have these physiological effects. But again, we may grant that perhaps Pārthasārathi is only concerned with the metaphysical nature of oil to produce the effect of health, a concern that the modern, biological explanation will not effect. If that is plausible, then, his more specific point is that the realization of this potency can occur mediately.

He here makes no distinction between the older, sacred and impersonal concept of extraordinary potential as the power of the ritual (to have a law-like connection with a result), and the profane and metaphysical notion of potency in general. Having identified them thus, he locates the power defined in this way within the human being who is the ritual agent. The stage is set for the next extension of the concept of potency, to a quality other than ritual consequentiality, namely, the consciousness

12 Ibid., pp. 252–3.

of the self of action. It is with that that he offers a defence against the threat of annihilation in liberation.

Non-cognition, Cognitive Potency and Defusing the Threat of Annihilation

Kumārila is content to leave liberation absentially characterized as the ending of all conditions of bondage, and therefore of all cognition. But Pārthasārathi is also interested in responding to the Advaitins (who in the centuries after Kumārila became powerful opponents of Mīmāṃsā) on the interpretation of the Upaniṣads. The particular problem for the Mīmāṃsakas is that certain passages in these texts seem to indicate that liberation is a supremely cognitive matter, in which consciousness of self is all. How can this be squared with the extinction of cognition, which the Mīmāṃsakas say is the very nature of liberation? Exegetical rigour, then, provides the interpretive context for Pārthasārathi's attempt to demonstrate that the Mīmāṃsā conception of liberation is not tantamount to annihilation.

Pārthasārathi's basic defence is that in liberation the cessation of cognition is not the loss of the **capacity** for cognition. Annihilation would mean that there could never be anything left that could cognize again. But in Mīmāṃsā liberation, the self persists (it is what is liberated, after all), and its persistence means that there is something left which could cognize again.

> The import of the text, 'No destruction of the cognition of the cognizer is known', is that there is cognitive potency; or else, it will have to be said that cognition continues even in deep sleep. It has been said that that just goes against all understanding. The import of cognitive potency is very clear: for it is taught, 'When it does not see, even while seeing it does not see'. There is no destruction of the sight of the seer, for it is not annihilated; 'Apart from it, there is no second that, being other and distinct from it, it could see'. (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.3.23)[13]

The defence is supposed to work through the introduction of the idea of potency. The Advaitins admit[14] that the assertion that the self does not see in liberation means that there is nothing – no **thing** – for the self to see without the operation of the senses. But, they argue, this only means that, since they are absent, there is no specific (i.e. objectual) seeing (*viśeṣadarśanaṃ*). That is to say, there is cognition as there is of and in the world, during unliberated, embodied existence. That is not to say that there is no consciousness as such. It is this contention that the Mīmāṃsakas find baffling, because they cannot think of consciousness as anything other than intentional, as having specific objects.[15] If they are not there, there is no objectless (or pure) consciousness. Having denied objectless consciousness as the appropriate description of the state reported as being both a seeing and a non-seeing in this passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, Pārthasārathi has to postulate potency in order to secure the seeing talked about there. The seeing is a capacity to see, while

13 Ibid., p. 269.

14 Śaṅkara 1914, pp. 617–20.

15 The details of this discussion were, of course, explored in Chapter 2.

the not-seeing is the simple absence of consciousness in the post-embodied state. The Advaitins, in contrast, take seeing to be the intrinsic persistence of consciousness, the not-seeing as the end of merely intentional cognition.

Pārthasārathi, then, make a sophisticated argument. The relationship of consciousness to the self is simply the corollary of the relationship between world and self:

> If here [in sacred texts on the matter] the self does not see in sleep and freedom, [this means that] though seeing – although having the capacity to see – it does not see. There is never any loss of the cognitive potency of the seeing self; that is indestructible. In that state [sleep or freedom], there is no second thing apart from the seer to be the means of seeing; there is no perceived object upon whose form the eye could function, [and] whose existence could have secured [any such] seeing. Even though perceived objects, forms, etc., remain existent by themselves (in their own right), it is said that, nevertheless, in that state, the visibility (the fitness to be seen) of the visible [objects] is not possible, so that there is no seeing of forms. Thus, the absence [of any seeing of objects] is figuratively taken (*ucyate*) as the non-existence of the visible object. Hence, because of the deprivation of a distinct means [of seeing], it [the self] does not see in that state, but it is not deprived of its potency; the potency is never lost.[16]

First he reasserts the self's cognitive potency, its unmanifested capacity to cognize. Then he moves on to his argument. There is no world, but only in the sense that there is no cognition of the world, in sleep and in liberation. That is because the senses, the instruments of cognition of the world, do not operate in sleep and do not exist in the post-embodied state of freedom. But if there is an absence of perception of objects, what other perception could there be? If there is seeing, there is seeing of objects; if there is no seeing of objects, there is no seeing per se. This, he implies, can be generalized about any other form of cognition (say, of intellection about abstract entities; there would be no body, thus no mind, therefore no reasoning). So, if there is no cognition of the world, there is no cognition. There is just a cessation of the connection between the world and the cognizing subject.

Pārthasārathi seems to think that the same can apply to the self. The world, after all, survives uncognized; that is central to Mīmāṃsā realist metaphysics. There are things – most generally, the world of natural objects – that are the way they are even without there being any cognitive operation on them. He argues that, equally, the self too persists even when cognitively inoperative. That is to say, the self itself has an existence independent of cognitive operation. It is not its existence that ends when the condition for its operation – embodiment – ceases, but its operation. Its persistence in the inoperative state is what is meant by potency. It can become operative – conscious – again, if there is re-establishment of the condition of its operation.

Pārthasārathi vigorously defends the consistency of this view with the teachings of the Upaniṣads. In a typically ingenious reading of a famous passage on the self, he proposes the Mīmāṃsā view as the best explanation on offer. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II.4.13), Maitreyi says that it is confusing of Yājñavalkya to say that

16 Pārthasārathi 1977, p. 271–2.

'sentience is absent in it' (*na cāsti saṃjñeti*) when it is dead and freed. He has, after all, earlier said of the self that it is 'nothing but sentience' (*vijñānaghana*). Pārthasārathi states and interpets Yājñavalkya's response thus:

> 'Oh, but I do not say anything that confuses through contradiction. It is indeed able to cognize.' This means that the truth about the self is that, in all its states, it has the capacity to cognize. It is, then, the case that the explanation, that the self is nothing but sentience, is intended to point out such capacity … All such sacred texts on sentience intend to point out potency.[17]

Pārthasārathi reads Yājñavalkya's assertion that the self is nothing but sentience even when it is insentient in liberation as indicating that the self has the potency for sentience. Its having the potency for sentience means that the sentience is not actual, not operative; that accords with the denial of sentience. But its having the potency means that it is defined by that quality, which accords with the rigid designation of it as nothing but sentience. Again, the contrast is with Śaṅkara's well-known Advaitic interpretation.[18] For Śaṅkara, the absence of sentience is the absence of specific cognitions individuated by objects and grasped through the senses. The self being nothing but sentience is the self in its intrinsic state, conscious without intentionality (for the Advaitins allow consciousness to be reflexively manifest without the apparatus of the body). According to Śaṅkara, when Yājñavalkya talks of the free self being 'able to cognize', this is precisely to indicate that the end of embodiment in no way means the end of sentience, since the self is always sentient.

The contrast can be put thus: for the Advaitins, the ability to cognize implies an actual, that is, manifested, quality; anything less would not count. Ability is understood through either episodes or continuous occurrence of the quality concerned. For the Mīmāṃsakas, the ability to cognize implies the potential to manifest cognitivity even when not actually manifesting it. Ability is understood as a disposition, even when it is not occurrent. What is it to say that a person is able to sing? The Advaitic interpretation would emphasize the fact that the person is a singer, and is always such a person (i.e. is not tone-deaf or gravel-voiced at times and a singer at others). The Mīmāṃsā interpretation would emphasize that the person has the potential to give voice (i.e. they do not sing all the time). This difference of interpretation is heavy with other conceptual commitments on both sides. I have described it in brief here, not to explore the comparative dimension but to indicate how specific to his theory is Pārthasārathi's reading of the sacred passage.

It is astute of Pārthasārathi to use that particular example; it lends itself to his way of resolving the tension which Maitreyi had pointed out between the two characterizations. He concludes that the sacred texts themselves make clear the validity of his argument for non-cognitivity.

17 Ibid., pp. 272–3.
18 Śaṅkara 1914, pp. 358–9.

Non-cognitivity, Potency and the Self as Object

The conception of liberation as the attainment by the self of a state without cognitive activity but nevertheless with cognitive potency is tied into various Mīmāṃsā claims about the nature of the self. I will end my presentation of Pārthasārathi's theory of potency with a consideration of the way a central Mīmāṃsā idea regarding the self, namely that the self is the object of its own consciousness,[19] relates to the issue of potency.

The relevant Mīmāṃsā claim, then, is that consciousness of the self takes the form of 'I'-thoughts. The 'I' denotes the self. As Kumārila says of the 'I'-thought (as that type of state of consciousness that has the self as its object):

> Its nature is not to have as an object anything other than the cognizer, for we always find the cognizer to be the cognized object of the 'I'-thought.[20]

Pārthasārathi echoes this view:

> It is indisputable that the cognizing subject (the cognizer) is the object of the 'I'-notion; one who apprehends, apprehends his own self as the 'I' and another as 'this'. Thus, it is beyond doubt that it has the cognizer as its perceptible object.[21]

This is the Bhāṭṭa Māmāṃsaka's core reason for taking the self to be the object of that particular species of conscious states. We cannot go here into either a defence or a critique of this theory of self. Suffice it to say that it has been one of the great debates of Indian philosophy and parallels one in Western thought. Both the Buddhist, who denies that there is a self, and the Advaitin, who denies that the self is ever an object, will argue that 'I' is merely the form of states of consciousness contingently given identity by a psychophysical complex called the person. To the extent that a person uses the first person in a reflexively unique way, that person is denoted by the 'I'. Everyone is agreed on that. But the Advaitins and Buddhists will argue that this cannot by itself mean that there is therefore a particular abstract or immaterial entity that is denoted by the 'I'. In other words, they will contend that the Mīmāṃsakas invent an object that can be picked out by 'I'-states of consciousness. They are misled into thinking that it is there because they find that there is an uncontroversial object – the psychophysical complex – that can conventionally stand for what is picked out by 'I'-thoughts that are uniquely limited to the bodily parameters set by that complex.

However, the Mīmāṃsakas can argue that it has not been proven that such an object has merely been invented by them. Theirs is still the best explanation for why there is the persistence of those uniquely reflexive 'I'-thoughts. They know perfectly well that the psychophysical complex is what is normally picked out as the 'I'; Pārthasārathi explicitly states, in the course of his presentation of a theory of self, that the intimacy between self and body leads to this mistake. But upon giving

19 Again, a matter touched on in Chapter 2.
20 Kumārila 1978, V.18.126.
21 Pārthasārathi 1977, p. 251.

up the notion that the body is the self – a renunciation his opponents share with him – it is they who swing to the other extreme of denying that anything at all is picked correctly by the 'I' thought. The candidate for what is picked up by the 'I'-thought is evident: that which has those thoughts, that which possess the quality of having thoughts at all. As Kumārila prefaces his contention that the self is the object of the 'I'-thought:

> … The 'I'-thought is not some confusion (*bhrānti*) that is sought to be removed by an overriding cognition.[22]

He is convinced by the persistence of the sense of an 'I' that it cannot be without an object. This is his protest against the radical revision of the understanding of the nature of consciousness that the Yogācārin of his time seems to be calling for through a rejection of the objective existence of the self.

Pārthasārathi concludes his sub-section on cognitive potency with the claim that a key teaching of the Upaniṣads should be understood in terms of his theory of potency:

> Due to the non-existence of the means [of cognition], the cognition of objects other than the self is ruled out. But there is yet the doubt as to why it is not admitted that the self cognizes itself in freedom; so it is said [in the sacred texts], 'by what could one cognize the cognizer?' The self indeed does not have the capacity to cognize without the means. It does cognize through the mind in the state of worldly existence, but there is no relationship with the mind in freedom. Hence, how could the self cognize itself? Obviously, self-cognition is therefore absent in one who is free. The sacred texts have pointed out that only the potency for cognition is resident [in the self].[23]

Of course, it is not incontestable that the question, 'by what should one cognize the cognizer?' should be understood only in this way. The Advaitin's interpretation of this would be that the cognizer – the subject self of all conscious states – is never itself the object of cognition. The self always escapes being the object of cognition. Whatever is cognized, the cognition itself is not cognized; and the self is the entity reflexively instantiated in that cognition. That is to say, when there is a cognition, there is within the content of that cognition itself an ascription to that which is cognizing; and that which cognizes is the self. The self is therefore always constitutively required for cognition but cannot, for that very reason, be that which is contingently cognized.

Against this way of reasoning, the Mīmāṃsaka, as we have just seen, holds it possible for the self to be the object of a particular form of cognition, the 'I'-cognition. All cognition requires embodiment. All cognition is of objects. The self is an object as well. In liberation, there is no embodiment, hence, no cognition even of the self that has the capacity to cognize. That is what the sacred assertion means. But from all that gone before, we know that the self has the capacity to cognize; that, indeed, is its nature. Therefore, cognitive potency remains in liberation.

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22 Kumārila 1978, V.18.125.

23 Pārthasārathi 1977, pp. 273–4.

The loss of self-awareness is inevitable in Mīmāṃsā liberation for, without embodiment (and therefore the sensory apparatus), all objects cease to be objects of cognition. That must include the self, for the self is an object. Equally, the potency for cognition is retained by the self, for that is not affected by its objectivity.

The Problems of Potency

Sadly, this complex defence of non-cognitive liberation collapses under the weight of its inconsistencies.

Presumably, the big difference between sleep and freedom as far as potential for re-cognition is concerned is that in the latter this potential is never activated: for what could the conditions be that bring back cognition? It cannot be the intrusion of the world into consciousness because freedom, if truly attained, is eternally freedom from the world.

Neither can it be a decision of the self, for two reasons. The first, comparatively trivial, is that there can be no motivation for the self to return from the liberated state, on the Mīmāṃsa account itself.

That may be dismissed; there may be a coming back, as with some strands of Buddhism and Advaita, for the good of the world. But there is a far more important reason, and this should be devastatingly problematic for the Mīmāṃsakas: nothing could catalyse that re-activation of cognition. If a cognitive act brought the self back into consciousness, liberation could not have occurred in the first place; but if non-cognitive liberation were indeed attained, how could cognition be reanimated?

Actually, this sort of 're-activation' problem is one that plagues both Mahāyāna Buddhist and Advaita Vedānta accounts of the *boddhisattva* and the *jīvanmukta* respectively. For the former, if the awakening is a moment in which all conceptuality – that binds through the creation of a world that is desired and a self that desires – is removed, what makes the one who has had that state return to a life of conceptual activity such as is necessary to compassionately teach the world of the possibility of *nirvāṇa*?[24] For the latter, if *mokṣa* is an insight into the universality of consciousness, what brings back the individuation required for the living seer to pursue a life of teaching and sacred interaction with others?[25] Of course, in both these cases, two conditions are supposed to hold that are absent in the Mīmāṃsā case. For one thing, there is the persistence of a sort of consciousness; that, indeed, is the vital cognitivism of both Buddhist and Advaitic conceptions of liberation. So, even if the psychological motivation towards renewed activity may be absent, there is some

24 I have attempted to develop an account, derived from some ideas in the 6th-century Yogācārin Dharmakīrti, of what could lead from the pure moment of awakening to the subsequent activity of the Buddha in Ram-Prasad 2001a. Paul Williams has argued that there is no way in which the requirements of compassionate activity after enlightenment can be met within any traditional notion of the awakening; see Williams 1998a. In the final chapter, I present a synthetic Yogācāra-Madhyamaka of Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṃgraha* and, especially, Kamalaśīla's *Pañjika*, on how the tension between a conception-free state and a richly conceptual subsequent life may be resolved.

25 See the exploration of this issue in Fort and Mumme 1996.

continuity of awareness. For another, these are specifically cases of embodied – living – realization, and are clearly distinguished from the post-embodied ultimate state of liberation. Therefore, the basic condition for specific cognitive activity, embodiment, is specifically retained. In contrast, the Mīmāṃsā situation is non-cognitive, without body and, by definition, ultimate.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the eternality of liberation commits the Mīmāṃsaka to saying that it is necessarily the case that there is no re-activation of cognition. If so, what is the worth of the assertion that there is potency, if it is never to be realized? How can the notion of potency be cashed if it is held that potency must never have to manifest itself?

It would seem that Pārthasārathi is misguided in trying to develop the concept of potential in order to distinguish between non-cognitive liberation and annihilation. His concept is neither here nor there. He may think that he must answer the demands of an empiricist epistemology and say how we **know** that there is a difference between non-cognitive liberation and annihilation. But the notion of potency is no use here because there is no way of confirming it; certainly, it goes far beyond what Kumārila himself, with his rigorously modest epistemology, would have been happy to admit. Alternatively, if Pārthsārathi is only trying to give a principled conceptual criterion for distinguishing between the two, he need go no further than invoke the role of the self. In liberation, the self, shorn of cognitive activity, persists, whereas annihilation adverts to the non-existence of the self. Quite simply, liberation is not annihilation because the self persists. There is no chance of actually finding out whether this is the case; but calling upon the idea of cognitive potential does not alter that.

So Pārthasārathi really is better off not using the concept of potency. That means, however, that he must abandon the aim of giving a reading of Upaniṣadic texts on the persistence of cognition that is counter to that of the Advaitins. The choice between philosophical and exegetical coherence is a stark one; and Pārthasārathi is by no means the only Indian philosopher to wrestle unsuccessfully with it. This challenge persists in classical Indian thought because of the search for the proper consequences of knowledge: if the knowledge is philosophical, then the gain might be rational consistency but at the price of soteriological uncertainty, for how will all this knowledge take us to the ultimate goal? If the knowledge is exegetical, then the gain might be an intimacy with the sacred and liberating texts, but the price of rational inconsistency might be one that is too high for the technical philosopher to bear.

Chapter 5

Conceptuality in Question: Teaching and Pure Cognition in Yogācāra-Madhyamaka

We have explored different views about the role of knowledge in the Hindu exegetical schools. Basically, the debate was over what significance to attach to the scope and purpose of knowledge. The Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā view was that knowledge was a mediate mode in the attainment of the highest good, and that the consequence of knowledge was the clarification of the power and course of actions that would be ultimately effective. The Advaitins, committed to a cognitive conception of liberation, always argued that the consequence of knowledge simply was the attainment of liberation. In Buddhism too there is a comparable split. Broadly, the Therāvādins conceive of liberation absentially and minimalistically as the cessation of suffering, and to be attained mainly through a life active in the practice of virtues. The Mahāyāna schools tend to place more stress on epistemic progression, and the Yogācāra school, in particular, links it with a highly cognitivist understanding of liberation. The synthetic Yogācāra-Madhyamaka Buddhists too retain this combination of holding the consequence of knowledge to be liberation and liberation itself to be a form of consciousness. But this raises the tricky question of how the epistemic consciousness of knowledge is consistent with the liberated consciousness that lies beyond it.

Two Ways of Reading this Chapter

The authority of teaching derives, of course, from the qualifications of the teacher. This consideration is both pressing and complex in the case of sacred teaching. It is pressing because, for those belonging to a religion, there is nothing higher – or more fundamental – as a source of guidance for thought and action than the texts of that religion. It is complex because the source of such teaching varies hugely within and between religious traditions. Where, as in a majority of major religious traditions, such teaching is revelation – either directly or though a special human agent – from a divine being, the epistemological question of the worth of testimony is subordinated to the question of the existence and nature of that being. (Secondarily, of course, it could be about the epistemic authority of the human mediator.) As opposed to mostly theistic Hindu systems, the Mīmāṃsā school boldly combines revelation of sacred texts with authorlessness in a non-theistic cosmos. The texts are revelations to seers, but from out of the very structure of reality, not from a specific author. Revelatory authority is separated from the issue of qualification.

Buddhism goes in the opposite direction. In it, there is no revelation of the nature of the truth, but purely an attainment of insight into that truth by a human being. The epistemological question of sacred teaching is all about the qualifications of the teacher who attained teachable religious knowledge. The authority of the Buddha consists in his having actually gone, from being like other human beings, through to some state that gave content to his teachings. His having undergone that transformation and his activity in consequence together render his teachings authoritative. In particular, since his teaching was exactly about attaining the very state that he himself had attained, what he underwent is utterly central to his epistemic authority.

This epistemological issue, however, cannot be pursued without complication. The difficulty lies in the nature of that state which he attained and which his teachings are meant to take us to. For something about what he underwent seems to block the very possibility of his being able to teach about it. This chapter is an examination of that difficulty.

Buddhism may well be unique in facing this particular problem (of combining the attainment of a state with being able to talk about it) in the specific context of ultimate sacred authority; for, as students of other religions know and as has been mentioned above, other traditions tend to locate the issue of sacred authority in the context of the revelation, rather than the attainment, of truth. But Buddhism shares with other traditions the problem of accounting for the communicability of the (on some definition) supposedly ineffable; it is just that other traditions tend to face this in the context of mysticism.

This chapter, therefore, can be read in two different ways. It can be read as an exploration of the possibility of sacred authority, in which the Buddhist insistence on the personal attainment of truth contrasts it with traditions in which revelation of truth is paramount. Alternatively, it can be read as a study of an attempt to relate trans-conceptual states with linguistic expression, in which the Buddhist concern with the Buddha's enlightenment and his subsequent teaching compares with the concerns of other traditions to articulate the ineffable content of mystical states. In either case, it is clear that while the consequence of some knowledge makes for liberation, liberation itself appears to block knowledge of it. It is this epistemic circle that must be opened up by the Buddhist philosopher.

The Problematic of Teaching and Pure Cognition

Yogācāra and Madhyamaka Buddhist accounts usually hold that the/a Buddha's enlightenment is a state free of conceptuality (*vikalpa*) but also that such enlightenment is expressed in a compassionate, subsequent teaching of the path to it. The need for freedom from conceptuality arises because concepts are seen as creating or projecting both the sense of self and experience of a world where self and world together form the ground of desire. The self desires and the world is desired. And, of course, desire is the cause of suffering. 'Self' and 'world' are concepts, and freedom from suffering can come only through freedom from the concepts that are implicated in suffering. On the other hand, the enlightened one who dissolves self and world upon coming to know of the emptiness of their nature would be 'self'-ish in caring only for

liberation, without thought of the suffering of others. Clearly, Gautama Siddhārtha, who became the Buddha, did not act thus, but stayed and taught the world the Noble Truths. He did this out of compassion for the suffering of all other creatures. But such teaching, surely, involves the recognition of and action in the conceptualized world; most obviously, it requires the use of speech. Therefore, there must be a persistence of conceptuality if an enlightened one is to act compassionately and teach others of the way to freedom from suffering. The problem then is to reconcile the conception-free nature of enlightenment that lies beyond knowledge with the conceptual activity required for and in post-enlightenment teaching that conveys knowledge of enlightenment to others.

In this chapter, I want to focus on two particular solutions given by the 8th-century Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesizers, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla to this fundamental problem. It is endemic to Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, but these great thinkers, standing at the fulcrum of the Indo-Tibetan tradition, have received insufficient attention in modern scholarship. Kamalaśīla does find a place in the Tibetan stage of his career. There is a famous debate between him and a Chinese Buddhist monk called Mahāyāna, in which he argues that there cannot be a literal cessation of conceptual activity in the enlightened person even when insight is logically the cessation of conceptualization. Mahāyāna's position is generally characterized in the Tibetan tradition as a commitment to the literal cessation of conceptuality. Kamalaśīla makes the point that the attributes consequent on enlightenment would not be possible without conceptualization of some sort. Arguably, it is his victory in this debate that makes the Tibetan tradition accept the central tension of conceptuality that is the topic of this chapter.[1] There is much worth pursuing in Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṃgraha* and Kamalaśīla's *Pañjika*[2] on it, but the present topic is interesting for its combination of epistemological, axiological and soteriological concerns.

Broadly, in the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis, the awakening under the bodhi tree was a state free from conceptual construction of self and world, a state that occurred in the stream of consciousness located in the psychophysical or bodily complex of the Sākya prince, Gautama. Hence, the problematic develops only because, using the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka idea of non-conceptuality, a contrast is drawn between this state which was pure of concepts and all subsequent states, for example, those during the first sermon on the Four Noble Truths, which were clearly conceptual.

The elimination of conceptuality in Yogācāra-Madhyamaka is the elimination of ignorance about the nature of things. This is because, going back to the *Lankāvatārasūtra*[3] and Asaṅga,[4] (i.e. the earliest strata of philosophizing in the

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1 On the Tibetan debate on the need or possibility of non-conceptuality in enlightenment, and the central role of Kamalaśīla in it, see Williams 1992.

2 Śāntarakṣita 1968 and Kamalaśīla 1968. All future references for them are to this work.

3 'Those who came and went this way, the realized ones, the fully enlightened, declare the nature of conceptualization to be characterized thus by attachment to names and attachment to the determination of objects' (*Lankāvatārasūtra* 1923, p. 67).

4 For example: 'The ultimate, intrinsic nature of all entities can be known only within the sphere of conception-free cognition' (Asaṅga 1966, p. 30).

school), Yogācāra takes conceptualization to be the construction of the conditions of unliberated existence, namely, a subject-self and object world, which do not exist irreducibly. To understand that there is no single, subject-self and no external world of objects is to become free of ignorance about the nature of things. This freedom is achieved in enlightenment, which is the cessation of conceptuality. The Buddha's spiritual authority consisted in his freedom from ignorance about the nature of things, his freedom from conceptuality.[5]

The Buddha's compassion, of course, made him take up teaching, for which conception-loaded understanding was required. How, then, could he be thought to be enlightened when continuing to use concepts in his teaching? The challenge for the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka philosopher is to give a comprehensive account of insight that resolves the tension between the purity of cognition required for **authoritative** teaching and the use of conception required for authoritative **teaching**.

The tension can be articulated in two ways. The first is as follows. Pure cognition is thought to be the highest good because it has been cleansed of the very conceptual constructive activity which leads to the sense of subject-self and object, and therefore to fear and desire. But teaching of the nature of things seems to mean grasping exactly the same conceptual constructs that make up their appearance; and that grasping, surely, is conceptual in itself. So how can the teacher be free of misunderstanding – through grasping and engaging with the world of bondage – when teaching? The tension arises here because of the need to ensure cognitive purity: that is, freedom from ignorance, attained, not through knowledge (that is necessarily conceptual), but through nonconceptuality.

The second way is the counterpart of the first. Pure cognition is the transcendence of concepts, yet compassion calls for teaching those who suffer about the nature of things, and such teaching – for which, exactly, understanding is required – involves speech, which is nothing other than the verbalization of concepts. Insight is pure but insight brings forth the moral requirement to teach; and teaching is conceptual. So how can one who is pure of cognition teach? The tension arises here because of the requirement to teach, which requires knowledge (that is necessarily conceptual), but whose authority arises from having transcended conceptuality.

5 I have argued that this is how the Yogācāra approach to the Buddha should be construed (Ram-Prasad 2001, Ch. 3). The treatment of the nature of the Buddha's becoming an epistemic authority (*pramānabhūta*) in Dharmakīrti focuses on the question of in *what* such authority consists (which requires a discussion of epistemic authority). The discussion starts, of course, with Dignāga's statement of *how* he is such an authority: he is compassionate, he teaches, he is free of future birth and death (he is the 'Well-gone') and he liberates (Dignāga 1968, I.1–7). See also van Bijlert 1989, Ch. VI. By contrast, I am trying to indicate here *why*, on the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka scheme of things, he should be held to be such an authority. In any case, it should be noted that Dharmakīrti's formulation of this question is profoundly important in subsequent Buddhist concerns about the role of epistemology in the attainment of enlightenment. Generally, the interpretation of his epistemology specifically in the context of the religious end is an important task in the Tibetan tradition, which takes up Dharmakīrti's philosophical concerns via Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. See Dreyfus 1997.

Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla suggest that what is required for cognitive purity in effect is psychological purity, and that what is required for teaching is an acknowledgement of phenomenal impurity.

Before we go any further, it must be recognized – and Kamalaśīla explicitly does so – that there is a strategy for denying any tension whatsoever:

> And others say that, through the prior impetus (*pūrvavega*) of volition, the Lord proceeds to speak even without conceptuality.[6]

The crucial link between the observable behaviour of speech and the inferred existence of conceptuality is severed in this hypothesis. That means that the purity of cognition is preserved in the stream of consciousness that is located in the person of the Buddha, for no perceptual and mental activity occurs. There is only the inertial – mechanical – continuity of verbal activity that is the aftermath of Gautama's (i.e. the pre-enlightenment Buddha's) original determination to understand the nature of suffering and its removal. Let us for the moment grant that this notion of a mechanically realized psychological impetus is cogent. Kamalaśīla in any case does not pursue this. Presumably, he does not feel able to take it seriously, for it would go against his requirement for the enlightened person to be aware of suffering and, taking pity on the world (*jagadanukampayā*), to return to it exactly to alleviate such suffering:

> [A]ctions, such as speaking, moving and so on are all caused by the desire to speak; and that desire to speak comes about … because of compassion … It [compassion], even without any grasping of a self, arises solely on the strength of the repeated seeing of [all] the particular forms sufferings.[7]

It would indeed be difficult to reconcile this richly attitudinal description with cognitive contentlessness. The gain made by the hypothesis of mechanical teaching, it seems to me as it seemed to have appeared to Kamalaśīla, is lost both in the conceptual problem of giving an account of cognitive content(lessness) and the doctrinal problem of reconciling it with the compassionate urge of the enlightened person.[8]

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6 Kamalaśīla on vv. 3358–61.

7 Ibid., on vv. 3363–64.

8 It is possible that a candidate for such a view would be the proponent of the metaphor of the mirror – where enlightened consciousness is said to merely reflect objects and not have them in its content – in, for example, the *Arthaviniścayasūtra*. For an ingenious reconstruction of the theory of contentless cognition in the teaching life of the Buddha (and my disagreement is not over the description of the awakening itself), see Griffiths 1994, p. 164 ff. But on such an account, the problem of the possession of epistemic authority sufficient for transformative teaching would be even more acute.

Psychological Purity

The first problem, then, is to see how the demand for cognitive purity, required for an enlightened being, is met when that being is also required, for reasons of selfless compassion, to teach about the way to enlightenment. The strategy is to construe insightful knowledge – required for teaching – in such a way as to make it clear that the import of cognitive purity is not compromised. That import is freedom from conceptuality, where conceptuality is the ignorant construction of a desiring subject and desirable world. To be cognitively pure is therefore to be free from misunderstanding. To be so free is to be free from desire (for, of course, the cessation of suffering comes from the cessation of desire). This is because to be free of conceptuality is to not conceive of self and world in the nexus of desire.

Pure cognition, therefore, is the highest good only because it is cleansed of desire-inducing construction. Now, if that person's understanding of the nature of things, though inescapably conceptual, is such as to involve no desire, then the important requirement for freedom will be met. Since that freedom is the import of pure cognition, provided conception-loaded knowledge too is free of desire, it will not be at odds with the essence of pure cognition. There will then be no tension here.

In the relevant passage, Kamalaśīla recalls Śāntarakṣita's earlier statement of an objection by a brahmin philosopher of the Mīmāṃsā school:

> If he (the Buddha) sees through direct perception, through his own awareness, he would become attached to impure (experiential) flavours …[9]

I use 'flavour' for '*rasa*', to capture the simultaneously specific notion of taste and the general and weighty concept of 'the way things are to awareness' (hence the contemporary philosophical term, 'phenomenal flavour' for the 'what-it-is-likeness' of experience, which we explored in Chapter 2). Flavour, then, is a metaphor for phenomenology. Śāntarakṣita reasons with his interlocutor, that conception-loaded cognition need not always commit the cognizer to contact and desire:

> If the Knowing Person is intoxicated because his sensory organs form a relationship with impure flavours, then alone is he to be reproached. He [in fact] becomes conscious of existent things mentally, and though not actually getting them, knows that which is controverted as [only] provisional (*saṃvṛtti*).[10]

Kamalaśīla soberly – and pointedly – glosses the picturesque 'intoxication' (*mada*) as 'being in direct contact'. To be intoxicated with objects is to be overwhelmed by being in direct contact with them through the sensory apparatus. This is how we ordinarily grasp and get objects (in the epistemic rather than merely physical sense). To be thus is to lack control over them and to take them as objects of desire (or the desire to avoid). The question now is as to how there can be any understanding – grasping of the nature – of the world when contact is needed but 'intoxication' is to be avoided. The enlightened or knowing person, the Buddha, must both know things

9 Śāntarakṣita, v. 3144.
10 Ibid., vv. 3317–18.

as they are and yet remain pure. Śāntarakṣita argues that enlightened awareness is consciousness of the world without sensory contact, what might be called knowledge of that world through pure intuition.

Kamalaśīla notes that this account is specific to a metaphysics built on idealism towards objects. In other words, the only coherent metaphysics is the Yogācāra one, which utilizes *cittamātra* – the theory of consciousness-alone as the irreducible reality of the world:

> All these objections cease [in any case], for they would exist only if external objects were possible. But in idealism, this is far from being given any room. It is thus: ultimately, no bodily form is possible, so there can be nothing impure about them. Not can there be any traces through the conceptualization of that [bodily form] because everything arises through ideas alone.[11]

Of course, he cannot mean that there is no impurity in life, for that would be to deny the very basis of the Buddhist insight about suffering. What he means is that, once it is understood that there are no objects and subjects to desire and desire for, there will be no suffering or impurity. Although he characterizes it as 'mind-only' (and 'idealism' is a good translation as well), the metaphysics is more than the mere denial of the external world and its reduction to mental objects. The ultimate position involves a denial of the reality of external and mental entities as they appear in conceptualization (i.e. ordinary or unliberated experience). It is a denial of any irreducible ontology, physical or mental. It therefore goes beyond idealism to the doctrine of the 'emptiness' of all essences. But the denial of the world of objects – that is, idealism – is the first step in that direction. Here, it is a necessary and important step, because it is in that world that impurity is located.[12] In a state in which it is understood that subject and object are ideas or conceptual constructs, there is no impurity, even when actual experiences continue to occur. (This idea is close to the later Advaitic notion that **ultimately** there is no suffering, once the nature of things is understood, and that, real though experience is, liberation is figurative, because there is always an ultimate state.)

In any case, knowing without sensory engagement is a significant notion in Yogācāra-Madhyamaka thought. It is a form of contemplation that is non-empirical. It is called *bhāvana*. Later in the text, Śāntarakṣita makes the case that this is the mode of knowledge for the enlightened person:

> Whatever is noumenally contemplated on, it is that which manifests itself with utter lucidity, upon the perfection of [such] contemplation, like with things desired. Great sages noumenally contemplate all entities, repeatedly over a long time, in their true form as empty, without self, and so on … That understanding, coming into existence through noumenal contemplation of existent things, is therefore valid.[13]

11 Kamalaśīla on vv. 3317–18.

12 The role and provisionality of the idealist denial of the world is discussed in Ram-Prasad 2001, Ch. 3.

13 Śāntarakṣita, vv. 3440–42.

Here, he uses the notion of noumenal contemplation to show how engagement with the world is compatible with freedom from misunderstanding about its nature. I use the cumbrous term 'noumenal contemplation' as a translation of *bhāvana* to draw attention to the notion that in it there is supposed to be consciousness of things without a sensory engagement with them. Now, it is possible to distinguish between two interpretations of 'noumena'. The stronger notion, due to Kant in the Western tradition, is of objects without the way they are presented to the senses; they then are supposed to be epistimically 'blank', beyond the bounds of sense and therefore of description. Of course, if 'noumenon' is used in this way, then any cognitive state (such as contemplation) of it would be a contradiction in terms, for noumena precisely are things (if there are and can be said to be such things) in themselves, without any reference whatsoever to grasp of them. (I will ignore here the further complication that Kant may be thought to have given different uses to 'noumena' and 'things-in-themselves'.) The other, and perhaps wider philosophical usage, is of noumena as objects grasped independently of senses. That is to say, given that the normal epistemic grasp of objects is phenomenal, that is, as objects presented in and through the senses, this special grasp of objects is noumenal in the sense that the modality of the senses is not involved.

Śāntarakṣita uses a conventional example in Yogācāra-Madhyamaka to suggest a parallel in ordinary life. The belief is that in intense thought, as of one's lover, there is an awareness of the image and presence of that person even when there is no sensory contact. There is awareness without experiential engagement with a present object, a visualization to the greatest detail without actual seeing.

It is not entirely clear here whether the use of an ordinary example implies that that contemplation is really of the same kind as is ordinarily available to us, only encompassing an infinite number of entities. In such a model of qualitative similarity, this would be a problem about the very possibility of knowledge of an infinite number of (or even all) entities. The example may just be, instead, a mere and imperfect analogy for an inconceivably different type of consciousness in which such all-encompassing yet disengaged comprehension is possible. This is God's power without a god; any further study would take us into the hoary debate over omniscience and the mode of apprehension that God or the God-like would have.[14]

This awareness, then, 'takes in' – that is, engages with – things without actually being involved with them (without being 'taken in' by them). Noumenal contemplation is the cognition of the way things are and not as they appear to and

14 On the Buddha's omniscience, as well as a conceptual analysis of omniscience in other Indian traditions, see Perrett 1989, pp. 125–42. On the Buddha's omniscience and its role in the interaction between the relative authority of his teachings and intellectual analysis, see Hayes 1984. Hayes argues that there is a steady erosion of confidence in independent philosophical inquiry and an increasing bias towards doctrine from Dignāga to Śāntarakṣita in Indian Buddhist philosophy. It may well be that there is more concern for the relationship between doctrine and argument in Yogācāra philosophers other that Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and hence more expressions of doubt about the ultimate value of analysis; but Śāntarakṣita and others betray their professed scepticism about the value of analysis vis-à-vis doctrinal commitment by actually doing rather a lot of philosophical analysis themselves.

through the senses; and paradoxically, contemplating things as they are in themselves is to understand that they are not, in fact, things in themselves but things constructed by the conceptual capacity of the mind. It is their being constructed that is not understood when they are merely sensed, that is, grasped phenomenally. In cognizing them as they are – that is, as constructs in consciousness – one understands that they are not such as to be engaged with or desired. They are mere constructs, engendered by and engendering (in a circle of interdependent arising) the desire and fear that characterize suffering.

This is insightful understanding; it is an epistemic achievement, and therefore capable of being communicated and taught. Its very occurrence is predicated on there being no vulgar attachment to the obstacles to freedom. Śāntarakṣita says:

> All entities, by reason of being things, being existents and so on, are illuminated clearly in the single intellection that is grounded in the exalted state of noumenal contemplation, like [ordinarily] with the beloved one, etc.[15]

So the enlightened person has cognition of things as they are. This is insightful knowledge, because it is knowledge that things are merely provisional on conception and desire. For that very reason, such cognition is free from misunderstanding, and therefore, desire. It is this knowledge that allows for the establishment and the teaching of the Buddhist way. At the same time, there is also freedom from any desire for things that are conceptually constructed. Such freedom is the import of pure cognition. Conception-free cognition is identified with enlightenment because in it alone does freedom from subject and objects of suffering-inducing desire seem possible. But cognitive purity occurs due to the insight that subject and object are not worth desiring for and desiring; that is, it satisfies the requirement for freedom from desire. At the same time, to be in that state is not to be conception-less; hence, there is no tension between cognitive purity and the conceptuality which is required for teaching.

This attempt at resolution might be thought to be a failure. The objection is that it is not possible to reconcile noumenal contemplation with desire and other mental impurities that come through ignorance. In other words, the required state of cognitive purity – at once cognition of objects and yet without suffering-inducing engagement with them – is impossible. The objection is due to Thomas Wood.[16] Wood's argument may broadly be put in this way: The Yogācāra Buddhist holds that cognition is reflexive.[17] Every cognition is not only cognition of an object, but it is also cognition of itself occurring. The occurrence of a cognition and awareness of its occurrence are one and the same thing (not merely simultaneous but constitutively identical). But that means that if there is cognition of objects, as there must be if there is to be omniscience, there is, by the same token, awareness of the occurrence of that cognition. But cognition of objects is impure; therefore the awareness of that cognition, being identical with it, is also impure. Hence, there can be no omniscience without impurity,

15 Śāntarakṣita, v. 3446.
16 Wood 1986, pp. 147–8.
17 See Chapter 2 on the formulation of Yogācāra reflexivity.

for the impurity is the result of the omniscience being of (constructed) objects and other such elemental impurities of existence.

This objection holds, however, only if we ignore the limits of impurity. Cognition of objects is impure because it leads to such states as desire and attachment. But there is desire only because the nature of objects is not understood. If the nature of objects – as not really external, and as ultimately conceptual – is understood, then there is no desire. If there is no desire, there is no impurity as such. There is a profound difference between our cognition of a thing and the enlightened person's. The former is of it as it appears and therefore a catalyst for various emotional responses to it, whereas the latter is of it as it is and therefore not a catalyst for those responses. We cannot derive the existence of impurity or affliction merely from the cognition. The Buddha's cognition is indeed of objects; but being of objects as they are, it is pure and free of desire. Insight transforms cognitive content through transformation of attitude. The consequence of the Buddha's knowledge is a psychological purification.

Impurity is now seen, not as a matter of the simple occurrence of objects in the content of cognition, but as one to do with the attitudes held as a consequence of cognition. This is a tacit admission that the occurrence of – conceptually constructed – objects in cognition is unavoidable in life, even in the post-enlightenment life of the Buddha. What can be changed, indeed, what changes, after enlightenment is the attitude of the Buddha towards the objects that occur in constructive cognition. It is perhaps to indicate this, although the distinction is neither explicit not systematic, that the word *saṃkalpa* – which may be translated as simple 'conception' – is used for our unliberated and automatic conceptualization, while *vikalpa* – which may be translated as 'discriminative conception' – is used to describe the continuing mental activity of the enlightened person.

Purity during a buddha's life (i.e. after a person's enlightenment) should therefore be seen as a psychological matter of desirelessness – that is, right attitude – towards objects, not a phenomenological one of the objectlessness of cognition. This brings us to the second form of the tension and its dissolution.

Phenomenological Impurity

If the culmination of the path is the attainment of phenomenologically pure cognition, how can there be teaching, when the former is pure exactly because it is conception-free and the latter is the verbalization of concepts? As Śāntarakṣita puts the question to himself:

> Here, the very first word cast out [by the enlightened person] supposes speakership (*vaktṛtvam*). Due to negative concomitance, there certainly is an incompatibility. If there is (even) discriminative conception, there is speakership; the omniscient person is conception-free. A cognition never reaches the entity when burdened by linguistic expression. Here too, those who hold that speakership conforms to analysis (*vitarka*) do not hold that omniscience can be allowed when speakership is [still] possible. Nor can

> omniscience be granted if cognitive states are conceptual. Thus, if conception is killed off, speakership cannot be accomplished.[18]

Omniscience here is the understanding that comes of noumenal contemplation, the knowing of things as they are (there are, after all, different ways of using the term 'all-knowing'). This is not a mere infinitely increased but still ordinary cognitive capacity which catalogues all there is, though that too is possible (this sort of knowing everything is confusingly called *sarvasarvajña*: all knowing of everything). Rather, it is cognition of the nature of all such entities as may be catalogued in the former type of omniscience. It is knowledge of the intrinsic nature of all things (*sarvajña*).[19] Knowing the nature of all things is indeed to pervade the totality epistemically; for it would seem that to know the nature of all things is to know (or possess the ability to know) all that of which there can be such knowledge. Whether this distinction is coherent or sustainable is another matter.

The fundamental point is that pure cognition is pure in that it is free of conception, but knowledge seems irreducibly conceptual. This point remains even when the conception is the especially discriminative one (*vikalpa*) that the enlightened being has in distinguishing the nature of all things. I take this to articulate the tension in a different way. We have considered the tension that arises regarding the implication of purity in the content of insight. The second tension is found in the consequence of insight: how can it be conception-free and yet discharge the need – motivated by compassion – to teach to those who suffer, of its attainability? The challenge Śāntarakṣita poses to himself is one which goes to the heart of Buddhism. Is the Buddha, who uses language by virtue of being a teacher, not really enlightened? Or is it the case that, although such insight is possible, it is a purely personal path and goal, knowledge of whose nature cannot be communicated to others?

Śāntarakṣita returns to the question (which he does not immediately answer at its first asking above) much later (although Kamalaśīla indicates briefly in his commentary, on the subsequent verses, the answer to come). He eventually gives this answer:

> It is not so; for all [simple] conceptions, which are afflictions, do not exist [in the omniscient person] because all impediments have been destroyed. Who would prevent that [conception from arising] which is favourable to the welfare of the world and therefore is proper ('healthy')?[20]

The problem with conception – the simple conceptualization (*saṃkalpa*) that characterizes all unliberated activity – is that it leads to desire and fear, to attachment and revulsion, to the afflictions of life as suffering. But the conceptions involved in

18 Śāntarakṣita, vv. 3358–61.

19 The distinction between knowing all things that can be known and knowing the nature of all knowable things, which is to say, all things which are objects of ordinary experience, is traced back to Dharmakīrti in the *Pramānavārttika*, II, v. 33. Ratnakīrti, Mokṣākaragupta and others following Dharmakīrti emphasize the supremacy of the latter as the proper construal of insight. See Kajiyama 1989, p. 136, n. 369.

20 Śāntarakṣita, v. 3597.

teaching by one who has had insight are morally different. Even if they are about world and self, they occur in the consciousness of the enlightened person only to help others release themselves from their suffering. Why should there be any objections to their existence? This, of course, is roughly the same answer as before, seeking to argue that, while there is indeed a tension, it should not be a cause for worry. The tension would be worrying only if conceptions afflict the person, but the conceptions of the enlightened person are not afflictions, they are necessities required by the compassionate wish to teach.

Kamalaśīla, however, points out in his commentary here that the objection is not just to do with affliction (*kleśa*) but, in consequence, with error (*bhrānta*). The tension is epistemic, not moral or psychological, for every conception, even a beneficial one, is ultimately mistaken about suchness. Śāntarakṣita recognizes this, and so goes on:

> In fact, he does not favour his conceptions as being [more] useful [than those of others]. He knows them to be without basis; he is like a magician. The magician knows that the image of some horse he has produced is not objective, and he is neither deluded by nor attached to it.[21]

Conception in the enlightened person occurs with the simultaneous awareness that the nature of appearance is conceptually constructed; this is different from the cognition of the unliberated person, who does not recognize the constructed nature of the objects of appearance. (This might be the distinction, as mentioned, which is sometimes indicated by the use of the words *vikalpa* and *saṃkalpa* respectively.) This is just to say that the conceptual life after insight is one in which there is a transformation of attitude towards objects (i.e. conceptual constructs) but not a transformation in the cognitive or perceptual content itself. The magician, like their audience, does have the same perceptual experience as their audience of a horse, for the conjuring up of an image consists in just that; but they recognize it for what it is, and hence do not commit an error about its metaphysical status.

The effect of this response, harnessed to the appeal to beneficiality is somewhat different from that given to the first form of the tension. There, the tension between the opposing demands of pure cognition and conceptually loaded knowledge was resolved by arguing that, even in the latter, there is exactly that freedom from attachment to conceptual constructs which is the import of pure cognition. In the latter form of the tension, in contrast, the response is not so much a resolution as an accommodation. The suggestion, that the cognition of the enlightened person is marked by conceptual awareness, does not alter the fact that conception continues. In both cases, the same end is achieved, namely, freedom from conceptual construction; it is just that in the case of pure cognition, freedom is literal and phenomenological, while in the case of knowledge-for-teaching, it is implicative and attitudinal.

The objection here is that pure cognition and the teaching based on insightful knowledge are simply incompatible because, while the former is purified of conception, the latter necessarily requires it. The first response does not meet this objection; it admits that there is conception in teaching, only pointing out that it

21 Ibid., vv. 3598–99.

does not bind as it does in unenlightened life. So Śāntarakṣita says here that the incompatibility is worrying only if it is not realized that the world of experience is conceptually constructed; only then does it lead to afflictions and suffering. When conception occurs only because of a conscious and compassionate decision to teach others of the nature of that conception, then it is not worrying to Buddhists. They recognize that the enlightened person deliberately indulges in conceptual activity despite having attained pure cognition.[22]

(It must be remembered that when it is said that the person attains pure cognition, what is meant is that there is the occurrence of a pure cognitive state in the stream or series of consciousness-states that contingently have their locus in the psychophysical complex. It is clearly not the case that there is some one being, a unified self, which has attained pure cognition. So, to speak of attainment is only to speak figuratively of the person, not literally of a unified self.[23])

In this response, some sort of impurity is admitted but in such a way that the necessary compatibility between the original pure cognition of the awakening and the subsequent conceptuality of the teaching life of the Buddha is preserved. The impurity is purely phenomenological. The world – the construction that binds – does constitute the content of awareness. It is its occurrence thus that permits all the movements and words of a compassionate career after the event that Gautama Siddhārtha underwent under the *bodhi* tree. To that extent, the stream of consciousness does carry the slurry of concepts; but, to stay with the metaphor, it does not mix. We have already seen that the requisite purity is preserved through the attitude the Buddha has towards the conceptual world, which attitude is based on his knowledge of its nature.

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22 Curiously, all this concern for justifying conceptual activity in the enlightened one co-exists with the evocative notion of him as the silent one (*muni*). The *muni* is found throughout the Indian traditions. He signifies, under different conceptions of liberation and spiritual awakening, the silence that descends with the transcendence of worldly transactions, actual and verbal; see Wayman 1974. Of course, the more philosophically inclined will point out that mere silence cannot possibly be sufficient indication of freedom from conceptuality; embodiment and the correlative persistence of experience and mental activity will ensure the continuation of conception-loaded cognition. That is why few of the explicitly analytic arguments of the Buddhist and Brahminical schools take recourse in silence as the mark of the liberated but embodied one. The Mīmāṃsakas simply reject the possibility of such a stage. The Naiyāyikas do not make any link between the liberated state and freedom from conception. The Advaitins, somewhat like the Buddhists here, acknowledge the need to reconcile radical change in cognition with the conceptual demands of teaching.

23 This does, however, raise the worry of whether a 'self'-less person can be selfless, so to speak; that is, whether the metaphysical denial of a unified self (howsoever conceived) can be consistent with either reflexive awareness of suffering and liberation or with a coherent attitude towards the suffering of others. In the context of the 8th-century Madhyamaka Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, see Williams 1998a.

Conclusion

In effect, then, the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthetic school accommodates the tension between insight as pure cognition and as conceptually structured knowledge, by accepting that they are indeed different. But the latter is important for the compassionate task of teaching others and helping them, whereas the former is the culmination of the path. The person who attains it, because not selfish (literally!), will return to conception-loaded consciousness in order to teach the path of attainment to others.

What remains pure – the attitude of desirelessness, based on knowledge of things as they are – is what is required for authoritative teaching, while what has to become impure for such teaching to be possible – the phenomenological undergoing of things as they are in experience – does not vitiate that necessary purity.

The importance of this accommodation lies in the fact that by acknowledging the persistence of conceptuality in the enlightened person, the Buddhist acknowledges too the persistence of world-engagement in that person. Of course, such a person knows of the nature of conceptuality and therefore of the nature of the unliberated, world-engaged and world-constructing life; but nonetheless, they continue to exist in it. The consequence of the Buddha's knowledge was both his enlightenment and the possibility that others could have it. But for others to have it, he had to, in a sense, draw back from the form of that knowledge, so that its content could be transmitted to others.

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